

Lost secrets revealed

Why did France's king decide to persecute the order?

Did the Knights discover this sacred ancient artefact?

**Back by
POPULAR
DEMAND**

Truth of the sheet that covered Christ's body

Why did the Templars become soldiers for God?

Are Freemasons the Knights' heirs?







Welcome

Historians find the Middle Ages a period shrouded in mystery. On the one hand, sources speak of greedy kings and corrupt popes who flourished during a time of widespread hunger, disease and servitude. On the other, nobler thoughts began to flourish. Led by their blind faith in the Word of God, holy orders of knights attempted to protect the weak.

The most powerful was the Knights Templar, loved by the people and whose code was the epitome of honour. But the Knights slowly succumbed to dark forces – if contemporary rumours are to be believed.

The order made alliances with Muslim princes, performed devilish rituals and were corrupted by their immense wealth. And then one fateful day the Knighthood's most dangerous enemy decided to strike – with fatal consequences. This is the story of the rise and fall of the Knights, their life on and off the battlefield, and the hunt for their legendary treasure.

Enjoy the issue!



“

Not that
he fears
death –
no, he
desires it.

” Bernhard of Clairvaux, abbot, who in 1128 wrote the
Knights Templar code of conduct, the *Latin Rule*.

”

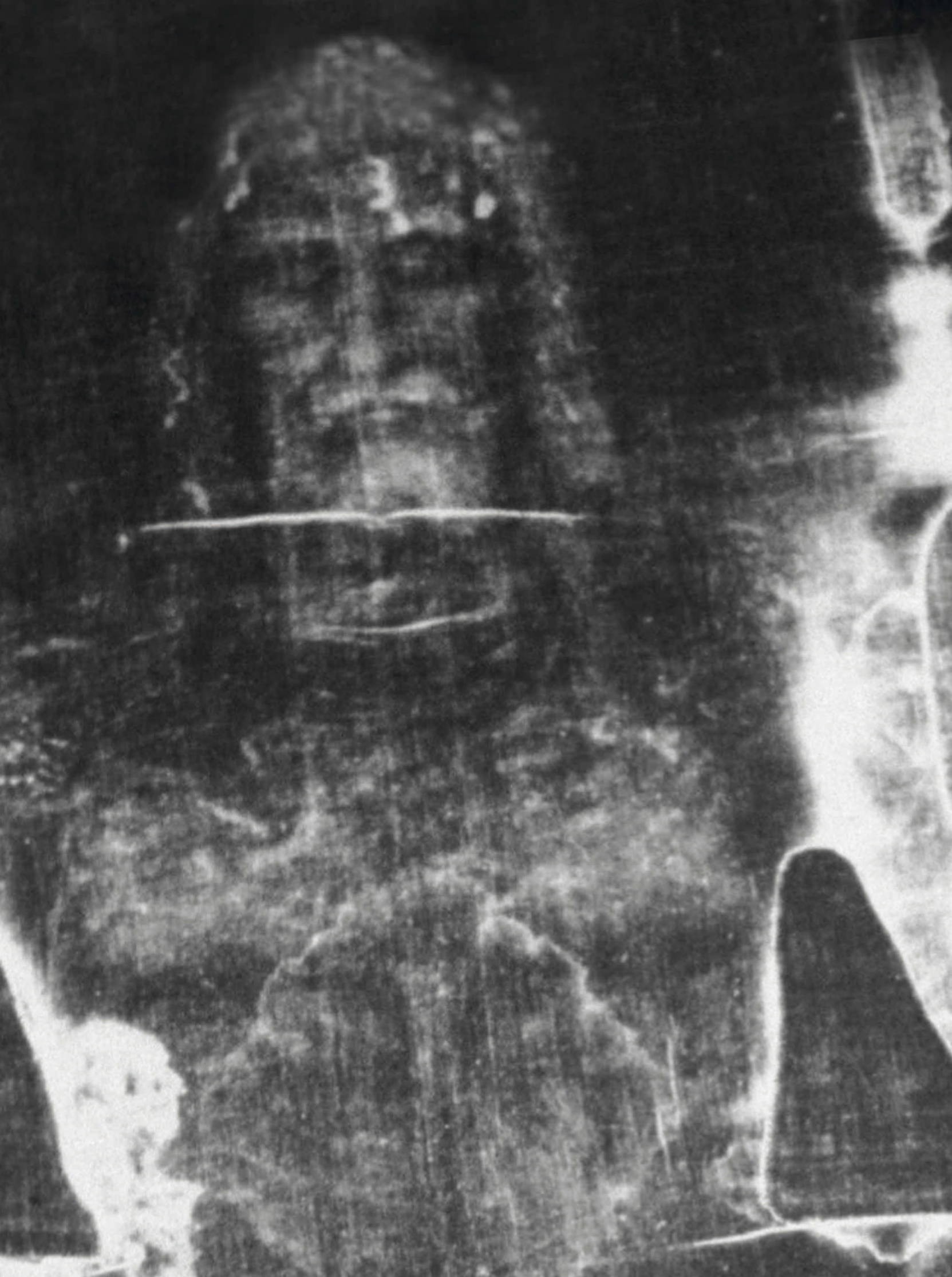


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The Shroud of
Turin is one
of the world's
greatest
unsolved
mysteries.

” Robert K Wilcox, author and expert on the Shroud of Turin.
Wilcox is one those who believe that the Shroud may
have been in the possession of the Knights Templar.

”



Contents



Downfall of the Knights Templars

In 1307, King Philip of France started a showdown with the richest and most powerful force of the Middle Ages: the Knights of the Temple.

Page **10**

Medieval war machine

For a hundred years, the Knights dominated the Holy Land's battlefields. Their success was due to disciplined, committed veterans and expert craftsmen.

Page **36**

The Templars' secret world

Most Knights Templar never wielded a sword in battle or went to the Holy Land, but their work was just as important to the Templars' mission.

Page **54**

The hunt for the Holy Grail

Treasure hunters have searched for the cup of Christ for centuries. Can Templar history reveal the whereabouts of this prized relic?

Page **68**

Is the Shroud of Turin real or fake?

The winding sheet that supposedly covered Christ's body is one of history's greatest mysteries – even today scholars are divided about its authenticity.

Page **80**

Secret heirs of the Templars

Did some persecuted Knights escape the purge? Do their values and rituals live on in today's Freemason movement? And what about the mysterious Illuminati?

Page **100**

In 1291 the Knights Templar lost the coastal fortress at Acre to the Muslims. The defeat was the beginning of the end for the order.



The Knights Templar saw themselves as God's warriors. The Knights led ascetic lives and fought to the death to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land.



DOWNFALL OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLARS

For two centuries, the Knights Templar were one of the Middle Ages' strongest powers until an indebted king and a weak pope annihilated them. **Today, historians are re-evaluating the brothers who amassed immense wealth, admitted to Devil worship – and perhaps continue to exist.**

It was late afternoon on 18th March 1314 when two men rowed out on the River Seine towards **Île des Juifs**. The sun was setting over Paris when the men landed, but they could still see the bonfire they were supposed to light. It was small – deliberately so – with only a few pieces of firewood. Men had to burn slowly so that they had time to confess their sins. As the fire licked up their legs, they would have a chance to admit their heresy before they met God.

One of the men who would burn was Jacques de Molay, grand master of the Knights Templar. On paper, his title made him one of God's most-important servants on Earth, and the head of arguably the most powerful army in Europe.

But nothing was as it had been. De Molay had spent the previous seven years in the dungeons of France's king, Philip IV. Under horrific torture, the grand master had confessed to the most heinous practices that a Christian could imagine: he claimed that the order worshipped false gods and performed devilish rituals in which his knights urinated on Jesus' cross and participated in gay orgies. Now, Jacques de Molay would be burned at the stake for his words. Historical records state that de Molay and another brother from the order,

Geoffroy de Charney, were roasted for hours before death finally came – and the era of the Knights Templar officially came to an end.

In the beginning, the Knights had been known for their extraordinary valour in the defence of Christendom, but by the start of the 14th century the order's merits had been forgotten. Instead, everyone was talking about how the order worshipped the Devil. But as de Molay died on the slow-burning bonfire, so too did his knowledge of the Templars' secrets and relics. Ever since, people have sought to recover the truth about the order's

hidden treasures, its destruction and the conspiracy cooked up by the French king and the pope that helped to bring it about.

Nine knights started it all

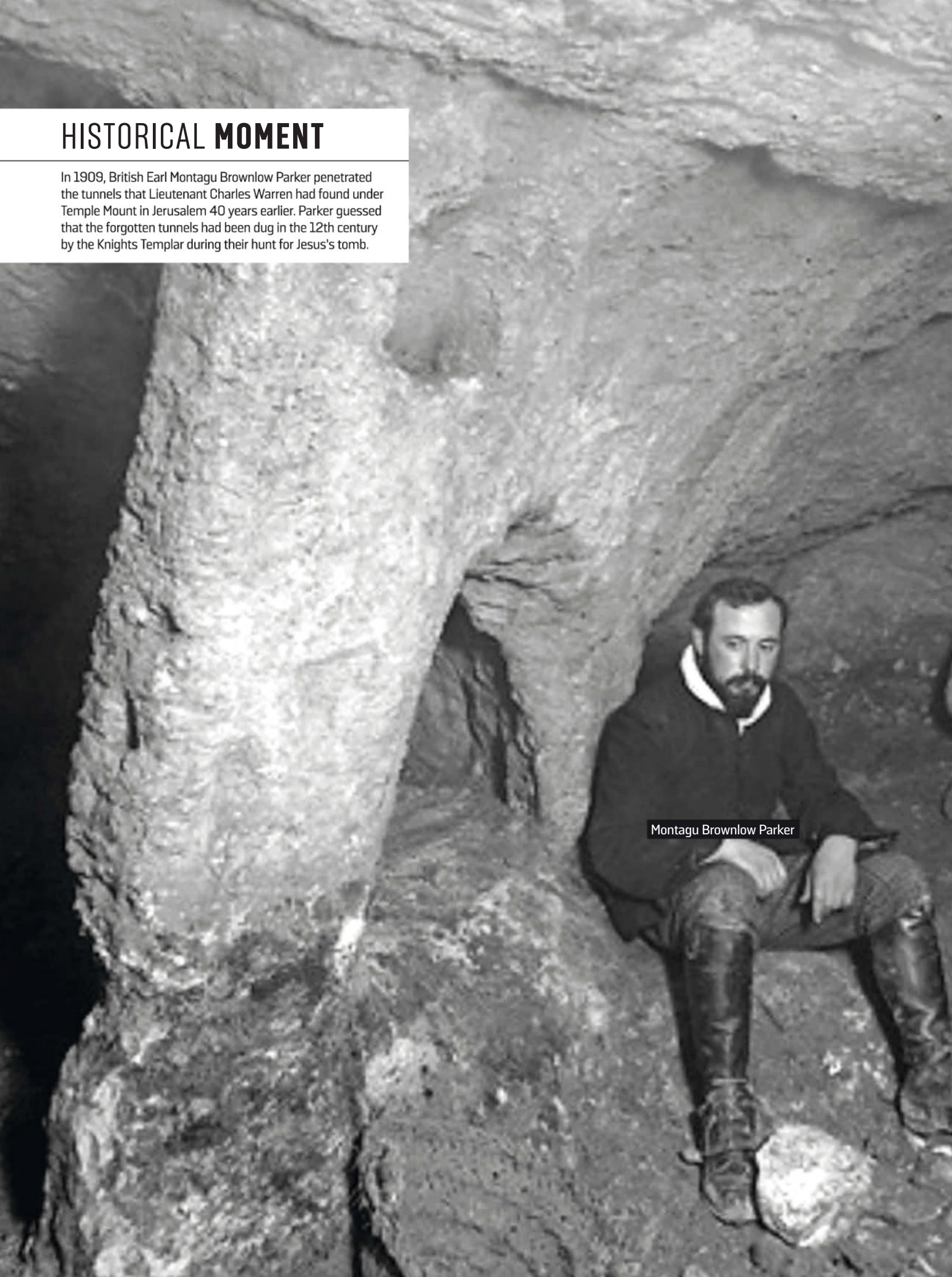
The story of the Knights Templar began with nine veterans of the crusades who, awakened by God's fire, swore monastic oaths and pledged to protect the thousands of Christian pilgrims travelling the roads towards Jerusalem. Preserved documents reveal that the leader of this group, a French nobleman called Hugues de Payens, asked for an audience with King Baldwin II of Jerusalem in 1119. At the meeting, de Payens requested the monarch's permission to establish an order of nine godly men who could protect religious devotees during their pilgrimage to the Holy

ÎLE DES JUIFS, means the Island of the Jews. It earned its name because of all the Jews who were executed there during the Middle Ages.

” Men had to burn slowly so that they had time to confess their sins.

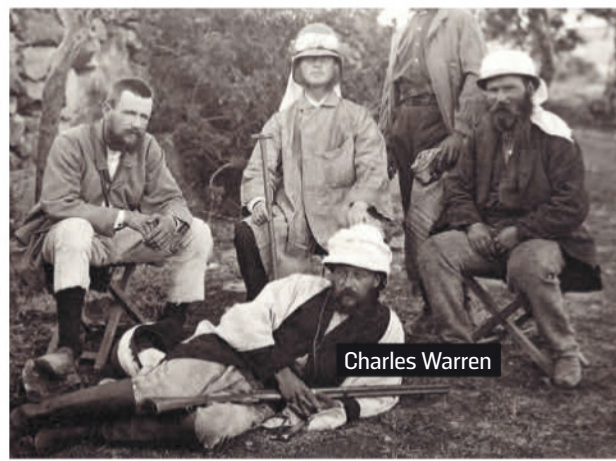
HISTORICAL **MOMENT**

In 1909, British Earl Montagu Brownlow Parker penetrated the tunnels that Lieutenant Charles Warren had found under Temple Mount in Jerusalem 40 years earlier. Parker guessed that the forgotten tunnels had been dug in the 12th century by the Knights Templar during their hunt for Jesus's tomb.



Montagu Brownlow Parker

English Lieutenant Charles Warren led the first excavations in Jerusalem in 1867. He discovered a network of tunnels beneath Temple Mount when he surreptitiously dug into the rock. Later, Warren became London's chief of police during the hunt for Jack the Ripper. He also participated in the Boer War.



Land. At this time, the journey through the Middle East was notoriously dangerous with robbers and assailants only too happy to prey on travellers from the West. **Hugues de Payens** was willing to

HUGUES DE PAYENS'

name appears on a document signed in 1085 at the Comte de Champagne's court. Historians believe that he was part of the court before he travelled to Jerusalem.

break with all monastic principles to secure their route: his warrior monks would use swords – unheard of at a time when religious orders knelt in prayer and left any fighting to knights.

The king was clearly impressed by the De Payens' passion and immediately told the nine men nominated by the Frenchman to establish a headquarters

in a wing of his palace at Temple Mount in Jerusalem – one of the world's holiest sites for Jews, Muslims and Christians. It was here that the legendary King Solomon was said to have built a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant, a casket that contained the original Ten Commandments. In time, the brothers' base at Temple Mount would give Hugues de Payens' new order its name – The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon – or the Knights Templar as we know them today.

Rumours hinted at secret treasures

The order's first year is not well documented, but some sources say that the Knights hired French masons and stone cutters to dig beneath Temple Mount. From the very beginning, the Knights kept the work secret, which only helped to fuel questions: what were the brothers digging for? Were they hired by the pope? And what were they doing at their secret headquarters?

Within a few short years, the order was the subject of all kinds of wild speculation. Rumours claimed that large treasures lay in the tunnels beneath Jerusalem and that the nine knights had unearthed Christianity's holiest relics. Some believed the brothers had found Jesus's cross and burial shroud, the Holy Grail and, yes, even the Ark of the Covenant. The medieval rumour mills were working flat out.

What the Knights' excavations found has never been revealed, but it's true that a network of tunnels exists beneath Temple Mount. British Lieutenant Charles Warren proved that in 1867 when he led the first documented archaeological

From 1909 to 1911 Montagu Parker searched for Christ's shroud in the tunnel network that had first been discovered by Lieutenant Warren.

excavation of the holy site. The political and religious situation in Jerusalem was as volatile then as it is now, making it tricky for Warren and his unit of Royal Engineers to get permission for the dig. In fact, the city's Muslim rulers only assented to excavations around Temple Mount, not beneath it. Undeterred, Warren pretended to dig at the foot of Temple Mount while secretly drilling his way through the rock.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

was built in the 9th century BC according to the Bible's Old Testament. The temple became a model for church building in the Middle Ages with the Freemasons revering it as an example of perfect construction.

Warren's sly methods led to the discovery of a number of tunnels and chambers as well as remains of a building that the archaeologist took to be Herod's Temple. Herod the Great had built on the ruins of **Solomon's Temple**, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Based on the building's style and the state of the stones, Warren was certain that he had found the Roman king's temple. He also found ancient walls, wells and aqueducts and drew a floor plan of the building among other observations.

Unfortunately, Warren's excavation disrupted prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on top of Temple Mount. The team was attacked by angry Muslims

and soon Warren was forced to halt his excavations. Archaeologists have recently tried to follow up on Warren's work, but religious tensions between Muslims and Jews have made modern excavations under or near Temple Mount all but impossible.

A single sentence proved fatal

No one knows today whether the Knights Templar really found anything buried beneath Jerusalem in the order's first year. What is known is that de Payens' Knights soon became a powerful force in the Christian world.

The Knights' role in safeguarding the pilgrims made the order popular throughout Europe. Everyone was taking about the brave defenders of the faith. Princes and nobles lined up to donate to the order. In addition to large cash bequests, the Knights received agricultural land – complete with peasant labour force and a fixed income.

In 1131, the king of Aragon, Alfonso the Battler, left his entire kingdom to three religious orders, including the Knights Templar. And as the reputation of the order grew, young men clamoured to be admitted. De Payens realised that in order to maintain discipline, the rapidly expanding monastic order needed codified regulations. Together with Abbot Bernard de Clairvaux, he began to draft the *Rule of the Order of the Temple*, which would later become known as the *Latin Rule*.

This document contained regulations for everything from the length of a knight's beard to the type of food they could eat on a Friday. In time, it contained 609 elaborate tenets and principles, and repeatedly emphasised the importance of humility and asceticism. For example, two knights had to share a single dish at the dinner table – a rule that continued to be observed even after the order had become rich and mighty. Of course, the order also demanded celibacy and forbade the brothers from recounting past sins or "carnal pleasures with most wretched women".

Historians agree that one stipulation in the *Latin Rule* stands out in particular. While it might seem insignificant at first sight, the 11th rule was key to the Knights' code. It stated that before admitting a new member of the order, the brothers should "Test the soul to see if it comes from God". At the same time, the aspirants had to swear never to reveal the secrets of the order to outsiders.

For Hugues de Payens, the 11th rule's guarantee of godliness had seemed important, but perhaps the grand master would have changed the wording if he had known how the interpretation of that particular phrase would lead to the brotherhood's eventual downfall and the slow and painful death

Equipment Templar helmet

MATERIAL
was steel,
which helped
to protect
the head and
neck against
sword blows.

A BRASS CROSS
plate reinforced
the helmet
and provided a
recognisable,
decorative
element.

SMALL HOLES
allowed air to
circulate and
cool the Knight's
face and head.



*The monastic Knights
prayed seven times a day in
the order's temples.*



*Illustrated bibles were
the only reading material
sanctioned by the Templars.*

of his successor almost two centuries' later. Historical sources show that the manner in which the soul was tested would, over time, become a bizarre experience for newly inaugurated Knights. And the mysterious ceremonies triggered sinister rumours, which played directly into the hands of the order's enemies.

But before word began to circulate about strange initiation rituals, the Knights were recognised as God's true soldiers.

Order received the pope's protection

In 1139, Pope Innocent II decreed that the Knights Templar order was no longer subject to local

laws and ordinances but was only accountable to the Holy See itself. With this papal bull, the brotherhood became almost untouchable.

The order used donated land to establish preceptories – satellite communities that helped train new Knights – throughout much of Europe. The brotherhood was especially well

➤ *Continues on page 18*

From **1099** to **1314**

THE TEMPLAR ORDER LASTED 200+ YEARS

When nine religious knights decided to protect pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, no one could have foreseen that in time they would become a powerful order both admired and feared by Europe's kings.



1099 Jerusalem is taken by Christian forces during the First Crusade to the Holy Land.

1119 Hugues de Payens founds The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon. Its purpose is to protect pilgrims.



1213 England's King John is forced to grant the Knights Templar large tracts of land in his kingdom to pay off a royal debt.



1187 Saladin's Muslims win a decisive victory against the Christian army in the Battle of Hattin in present-day Israel.

Saladin wipes out most of the Knights Templar. Later the same year, the Muslims take the city of Jerusalem.



1291 The Knights Templar lose their last foothold in the Holy Land, the fortress at Acre. Cyprus becomes their new headquarters.



1292 Jacques de Molay is elected grand master of the Knights Templar. He tries to win support for another crusade.



1120 The order moves into its HQ at Temple Mount in Jerusalem courtesy of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem. The order takes its name from its location.



1139 The pope gives the order special protection. From now on they only answer to the pontiff.



1177 The Knights Templar defeat a numerically superior Muslim force in the Battle of Montgisard.



1150 The Knights begin issuing credit to crusaders. Money lending soon makes the new order wealthy.



1307 Philip IV arrests Templars all across France.



1312 Pope Clement V officially dissolves the order. Many Knights flee to less hostile European countries.

1314 The order's last grand master, Jacques de Molay, is burned at the stake in Paris near Notre-Dame.



represented in France, but land and fortunes came from throughout the continent and the British Isles, and successive grand masters soon built a network of outposts outside the Holy Land from Scotland in the north-west to Cyprus in the south-east. By the middle of the 12th century, the Knights' power base was beginning to take shape and the European map was dotted with their properties and possessions.

In the preceptories, crusaders heading to the Holy Land could exchange gold for promissory notes that could be redeemed at the order's offices in the Middle East. The Knights Templar, with its power and reputation for honesty, acted as guarantors for the money, and historians believe the scheme worked in a similar way to today's traveller's cheques. Soon, the Knights Templar expanded its financial services by lending money to kings and princes throughout Europe.

The revenues earned funded a force of 3,000 Knights. This was one of history's first examples of a standing army; medieval wars usually relied on mercenaries to fight the battles. In addition to feeding the knights, the order paid for horses, supplies, bodyguards and administrative staff. Accounts show that a large part of the order's revenue was swallowed by military spending.

Dangerous relations

While the Knights Templar gained influence in Europe, the situation was different in the Holy Land. Wars raged against successive Muslim rulers and popes and European kings regularly called for crusades to defend Christian interests there. For

the Templars, who numbered just a few thousand men, every life was precious. Instead of entering into conflict, the Knights preferred to take a more pragmatic, cooperative approach to relations with Muslim rulers in the region. The order even hired Muslim secretaries and exchanged ideas and knowledge with Middle Eastern potentates.

By combining European ingenuity with Muslim knowledge, the Knights Templar became technological pioneers: the order had the best smiths, leathermakers and stone cutters. Templar military architects and engineers constructed some of the Middle Ages' best defensive works. The order also had a fleet of ships and contributed to the development of both cartography and navigation, while its sea captains were among the first Europeans to use compasses.

For the Knights Templar, it made good sense to work with the Muslims. But many Christians had difficulty understanding how the order could cooperate with a people they considered to be an enemy. In the eyes of some, the brothers were no longer God's knights, but instead were agents of the Devil who were ceding the Holy Land to Islam.

In time, stories that the order had deliberately undermined the crusades through its alliances with Muslim rulers began to spread; *Annales Herbipolenses*, an anonymous contemporary account, even claimed that the Knights received bribes from the ruler of Damascus, Mu'in ad-Din Unur, to sabotage the crusades.

Such an accusation was poison for the order, but the brotherhood did little to counter the rumours. On the contrary, the Knights' operations became

The first ... **CRUSADE** | 1096-1099

First Crusade ushered in a new era

Pope Urban II called for a crusade in 1095 to take Jerusalem from the Muslims. Enthusiasm for the war spread rapidly across Europe, and thousands of nobles and peasants rallied to the cause. The departure date was set for August 1096, but some groups left as early as spring. Despite shortcomings in its organisation, the crusade was a great success. Jerusalem was occupied by Christian forces in July 1099. Large parts of the city's Muslim population either fled or were put to the sword.

In the centuries that followed, the fighting over Jerusalem and the Holy Land raged between Christian knights and Muslim forces, and the balance of power shifted many times. The Muslims won ultimately, expelling the last Christians in 1291.



The First Crusade ended in triumph for the Christians as Jerusalem was conquered and the Muslims expelled.

DARK TIMES AHEAD

As the 13th century ended, the order's reputation was diminishing. Its former supporters were growing sceptical due to its defeat in the Holy Land, relationship with the Muslims and the rumours of unholy rituals. Monarchs threatened by the order's power were emboldened to make a stand. For one man in particular, the timing was perfect: France's King Philip IV – known as Philip the Fair (for his good looks, rather than his just temperament). When the Knights lost Acre in 1291, Philip was ready to strike.

more secretive still. This was the seed for the conflict between the Templars and the religious and secular leaders of Europe, and it grew fast. A few years later, the order had been eradicated.

In 1187, the Muslim sultan, Saladin, beat the Knights Templar in a decisive victory at the Battle

of Hattin. Not only did the order lose the bulk of its army and the city of Jerusalem – but the order also had to say goodbye to its legendary military reputation. Shortly after the battle, Saladin beheaded hundreds of captured crusaders. Defeated, the Knights Templar moved its headquarters to Acre on the Mediterranean coast. But it was unable to recover its numbers following the losses at Hattin. Slowly, the brothers began to realise that they could no longer protect the Holy Land.

In 1291, Acre fell to the Muslims and the Templars' headquarters moved again – this time to Cyprus. The order brought with it its archive of secret knowledge and most-important relics. But while the brotherhood saved most

Continues on page 24

“His soul is protected by an armour of faith, just as his body is protected by an armour of steel.”

Bernard de Clairvaux describes the Knights Templar





INTERVIEW

Seán Martin is an expert on the Knights Templar.

Seán Martin is an Anglo-Irish writer who has authored several books – including *The Knights Templar* – and has contributed to a number of TV documentaries about the order.

The Knights Templar lived on in secret

The pope dissolved the Knights Templar in 1312 but instead of disbanding could the order have gone underground? Author Seán Martin has proof that the brotherhood was still active in several places in Europe after its supposed downfall – in one location it even enjoyed royal protection.

? Did the Knights Templar order continue to exist in secret after the arrests?

It is unlikely that entire preceptories and Temples could have remained hidden from Philip's forces. However, some individual Knights definitely managed to avoid being arrested during Philip's roundup in 1307. For example, we know that seven armed Knights appeared at the Viennese council in October 1311 to defend the order.

? How did these knights avoid the king's net?

The arrests initially only took place in France. Perhaps some Knights had been travelling and stayed away when they heard about the events. These Knights would have had plenty of time to organise themselves and prepare a defensive case. And even in France, Philip's men might not have caught everyone. There were hundreds of large and small Templar properties across the country, and I am quite certain that several Knights escaped being caught.

? Is it possible that the Knights were warned about the imminent arrests?

Absolutely. There seems to be evidence that the Knights Templar had knowledge of an impending disaster. In the late summer of 1307, Grand Master Jacques de Molay requisitioned all the order's rule books and accounts and had the documents burned. And a brother who left the order around the same time was told that his decision was "wise".

? Where could the Knights who avoided prosecution have gone?

Scotland is an obvious place. The connection between Scotland and the Knights Templar dates back to the earliest days of the order. The founder, Hugues de Payens, visited Scotland on a European tour in 1127-1129, and the order received some of its largest donations from Scotland. Scotland is remote and would have been an ideal

headquarters for the Knights Templar from 1307 onwards. In fact, it seems likely that the order was based in the British Isles longer than anywhere else.

? What evidence do we have that the Knights Templar survived in Scotland?

Scotland was an obvious place for fugitive Templars to go.

In 1312 the pope issued a papal bull, *Ad providam*, that transferred Knights Templar property to the Hospitallers. But in Scotland, the process took longer than anywhere else: the Hospitallers there were still trying to gain control of some of the Knights Templars' properties up until the 1340s. So, the natural question is who controlled those possessions in the intervening years? And even more thought-provoking is the fact that King James IV of Scotland renewed the privileges of the Knights in a charter of 1488. That document indicates that the Knights still existed in Scotland in some form more than 150 years after the official dissolution of the order. What happened next is open to question. Some believe



After the dissolution of their order, the Templars continued to occupy the same castle in Tomar in Portugal under a new name.

that survivors of the Knights Templar became part of the Masonic movement in Scotland, but that is a moot point.

? Are there traces of any Knights elsewhere?

Swiss folk-tales speak of white-clad knights, a description that fits well with the Knights Templar. It's possible that the Knights were active in Switzerland before their dissolution. The last possession of the Knights in the Holy Land was lost in 1291, and the

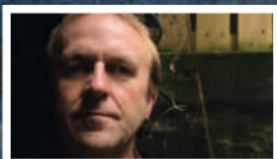
Templars may have seized the chance to fight for a new cause in Switzerland.

Swiss Confederacy was established in August of that year. It probably wasn't official Templar policy to help the Swiss cantons, but it is certainly not impossible that one or more groups of Knights Templar offered assistance. And their engagement may have continued after 1312. Knights seeking a new purpose may have seized the chance to fight for a new cause. In this case, the Swiss struggle for independence from the Holy Roman Empire. Swiss fighters also quickly gained a reputation as being some of the

best soldiers in Europe. Where did the men get their training from?

? In the Iberian Peninsula a number of monastic military orders arose after 1312. How close were they to the Templars?

The Order of the Knights of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which formed in Portugal in 1319, was really the Knights Templar under a new name. The order was created at the behest of the King of Portugal because he did not believe the charges levelled against the Templars.



INTERVIEW

Seán Martin is an expert on the Knights Templar.

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You could say that Portugal's Knights of Christ order was simply a new version of the Knights Templar, but one benefiting from royal protection.



Do you believe the stories that the Knights Templar discovered America before Columbus – possibly as part of a new Portuguese order?

The theory that the Knights Templar reached America is, in my opinion, the result of a mix of stories about the Knights

Templar and the Knights of Christ. I do not give much credence to the tale that the Knights Templar went to America as part of Henry Sinclair's voyage, or that they may have sailed to the New World on their own. However, there is no doubt that the Knights of Christ did actively explore the Atlantic for the Portuguese crown. Vasco da Gama was a member of the order, and Columbus had close links to it, so the successors of the Knights Templar played a part in the discovery of America. But whether

The Knights Templars' failure to reinvent itself left it politically exposed.

one can actually say that the Templars discovered America is a classic example of the Ship of Theseus paradox [which questions whether an object that has had all its parts replaced can be described as being the same object].




Many Knights who did not flee joined other orders. Why weren't these orders persecuted in the same way?

The Knights Templar were politically exposed. The order had always been

The Hospitallers became a new home for many former Templars.





“ If the archives could be found, the documents would be a great source of knowledge about the Templars

focussed on the Holy Land and it still had the same mandate in 1307 – despite the order's last possession there being lost in 1291. As a result, the Knights Templar no longer had a valid purpose and were therefore an easy target for Philip. Other orders had been better at orienting themselves towards new goals.

The two most important rivals to the Knights Templar were the Hospitallers and the Teutonic Order [formally known as The Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem]. The Hospitallers gave themselves a maritime

mission with bases in Rhodes and later Malta, while the Teutonic Order focused on battling pagans in the Baltic region and Northern

Europe. To use a modern expression, the two orders succeeded in re-branding themselves.

❓ Was their new styling sufficient to clear the two orders from similar persecution?

Not quite. The Teutonic Order was examined in 1312 – the same year as the Knights Templar order was finally dissolved. The order was under suspicion of holding pagans and practising witchcraft. Around the same time, there was talk of 'reforming' the Hospitallers, but that never materialised. I think both orders survived because of a lack of evidence and because they were more

politically resistant than the Knights Templar order.

❓ Do you think the Templars continued their traditions in the new orders?

We must assume that the former Knights Templar stuck together when they joined the Hospitallers and the Teutonic Order. We don't know enough about the Knights Templar's rituals to determine whether they were still practised in the new setting. But in Portugal, I am certain that the former Templars continued to use similar rituals – albeit they probably refrained from spitting on the cross!

❓ The Knights Templar are said to have possessed important religious relics, including the Shroud of Turin and the Holy Grail. Do you think that's likely?

It is certainly not impossible. Recent research has shown that the Knights Templar had a piece of material that resembled the Shroud in 1287 – about 70 years before we hear about it officially. Perhaps a cult evolved around the Shroud of Christ in certain Templar circles, but it doesn't appear to have been widespread throughout the order. The Holy Grail is more uncertain, and I do not believe the story about the Ark of the Covenant at all. We have no evidence

that the Knights Templar had it, and even the very existence of the Ark is questionable – although the legend is, of course, fascinating.

❓ Why are the relics of the Templars – and the order itself – so compelling to us today?

I think the Knights Templar appeal because the narrative of the order is where history and myth meet. We have so few primary sources – the order's own archive vanished among other

things – that the order is a kind of blank piece of paper onto which people can project all kinds of theories and fantasies. The order is, in a way, the story as

it should be – full of amazing secrets, magical properties and unresolved puzzles. Even if you don't believe most of the conspiracy theories – which I don't – the Knights Templar is still fascinating because the combination of facts and rumours shows how history is often created: mistakes occur, are repeated and, eventually, are accepted as the truth. In its darkest form, this is also how politics is conducted, but looking on the brighter side, this combination of myth and history stimulates our imagination and, in a way, makes us more complete; it enriches us.

❓ Which part of the Knights Templar story would you change if you could?

The Knights Templar archives in Cyprus disappeared – possibly when the Ottoman Turks invaded the island in 1571 – and probably no longer exists. But if the archives could be found, the documents would be a great source of knowledge about the Templars.

The Shroud of Turin may have been the subject of a cult among the Knights.

Equipment | Templar horses



MENTAL TRAINING

Horses were indispensable on the battlefield and were trained to tolerate the sound of battle

SYMBOLISM

One of the order's seals shows two knights riding one horse – signifying the knights' vow of poverty.

ENDURANCE Long marches were frequent, so the Templars' horses had to have strength and stamina.

of its wealth, it had lost its purpose: pilgrims no longer needed protection on their way to the Holy Land, because they were no longer able to go there.

France's king targeted the Templars

Some years later, in 1305, France's King Philip IV was in mourning for his wife, **Joan I of Navarre**, when he suddenly became consumed by religion. After labelling the country's Jews as heretics, confiscating their property and expelling them, Philip turned his gaze on the Knights Templar.

The order was a natural target for the king – not least because the Knights had loaned the French monarch enormous sums of money that he was unable to repay. The combination of Philip's religious zeal and the rumours about the Templars' unholy rituals may have been enough to spur him to act without further inducement, but freeing himself of a crippling debt must have made the idea of bringing down the Templars irresistible.

Historians have wondered why the Templars were targeted when similar orders, such as the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John – known as the Hospitallers – also had immense riches that the king could have confiscated. The reason is probably that the Templars were easier to discredit because of the brothers' secrecy and their cooperation with the Muslims. The Knights

had always cultivated an image as withdrawn and enigmatic. Plus, disturbing rumours continued to circulate about its strange initiation ceremonies.

Spies infiltrated order

In 1306, Philip ordered two men to infiltrate the Knights Templar. The spies were to apply to enter the order, undergo the initiation process and report back on any irreligious activity.

One year later, on Friday 13th October 1307, Philip organised a dawn raid: French bailiffs and judicial officers hammered at the gate of the Temple in Paris, the Knights Templar's headquarters in Western Europe. When the gate opened, the king's men rushed in and arrested all the Knights, aides and clerks they could find. The surprise was so complete that no one even resisted. Over a hundred people were clapped in irons and taken to the city's prisons. Among those arrested was Grand Master Jacques de Molay, whom the King had already tricked into coming to Paris from the Knights' base in Cyprus. The grand master had been invited to attend the funeral of Catherine de Courtenay, the wife of Philip's brother, Charles de Valois.

Similar scenes took place all over France. In a well-coordinated operation, the king's men raided all the Knights' French properties and temples. The general population looked on stunned. Although the reputation of the order had been tarnished, no one expected to see God's knights in chains. Philip's reason for arresting the brothers was equally shocking.

Outwardly at least, the king gave the impression of being disturbed by what he had discovered going on behind the order's closed doors. In the arrest warrant, the king wrote about his shock on hearing the truth following his spies' investigation, calling it "a bitter deplorable thing... a detestable crime, an execrable infamy, an abominable act, a hideous scandal, a completely inhuman thing."

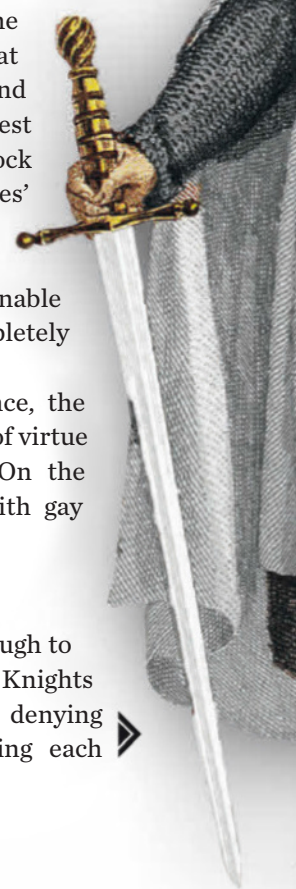
According to the king's intelligence, the Knights were far from being models of virtue who lived celibate, humble lives. On the contrary, the order was infested with gay Devil worshippers.

Torture broke the Knights

Philip listed a string of charges – enough to fill several sheets of parchment. The Knights Templars' alleged sins included denying Christ, spitting on his cross, kissing each

JOAN I OF NAVARRE

married Philip IV of France in 1284. She was 11 and he was 16. According to contemporary reports, the couple had a close and loving relationship.



King's men made arrests all over France

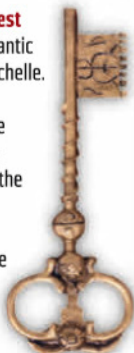
The operation against the Knights Templar on Friday 13th October 1307 was well orchestrated. The raids on Templar property were carried out simultaneously right across the country.

The Temple in Paris was the order's **HQ in Western Europe**. The towering building stood in today's fashionable Le Marais quarter. Over **a hundred people** were arrested, including the order's grand master, Jacques de Molay.



ATLANTIC OCEAN

The Templars' **largest fortress** on the Atlantic coast was in La Rochelle. The city was the headquarters of the order's fleet, which controlled most of the trade between the Mediterranean and England. Many were captured in the city, but the **fleet escaped**.



Paris

Bas-sur-Seine

A **small preceptory** was located in Bas-sur-Seine, near the birthplace of the order's founder, Hugues de Payens. At **least 20** of the Knights there were put in chains and imprisoned.



La Rochelle

FRANCE

Richerenches was home to one of the Knights Templars' most **important castles**. Lord Hugh de Bourbonnion donated the fortification to the order in 1136. Around **20 Knights** were taken from there during the raids.

La Couvertoirade

Richerenches

The entire **town of La Couvertoirade** belonged to the Templars. The town passed to the Hospitallers after 1312.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Jacques de Molay usually stayed at the order's headquarters in Cyprus, but was summoned to a funeral in Paris in October 1307. It was no doubt a ruse by Philip to catch the grand master in his net.



other in intimate places during their initiation, holding secret masses at midnight, worshipping a devil's head called Baphomet, giving each other unauthorised pardons and worshipping a cat.

It was one thing to have put the Knights behind bars, but another matter entirely to prove their guilt. Fortunately for Philip, the pope had sanctioned the use of torture for religious crimes a few decades earlier. Some of the Knights confessed just on seeing the instruments available in the king's dungeons: racks that would slowly tear apart a body's joints, bone crushers and various refined methods for applying fire to skin and flesh.

Of the 138 Knights interrogated in Paris during October and November 1307, only four refused to confess. Most – 123 brothers – confessed to spitting on a crucifix during their initiation; 105 confessed to denying Jesus; and 103 pleaded guilty to kissing the base of the spine and navel of other brothers.

The news of the confessions quickly reached the streets of Paris, where the general public turned against the order. Outraged citizens gathered to jeer the Knights. Their reaction was exactly what Philip had been hoping for.

Pain provoked strange confessions

The torture continued for weeks. Even those who had already confessed were tortured again in case they had more to tell.

One of the torturers' most-effective methods involved roasting prisoners' feet. The victim's feet were coated with fat, then secured in front of a fire. The torturers placed a board between the fire and the feet while they asked their questions.

Father Bernard de Vado was tortured in this way for days until the bones finally fell out of his feet.

Some Knights were tortured so thoroughly that they admitted more than the indictment contained. The records show that some admitted to having sex with demonic women and killing newborn infants. One Knight, who survived the torture and interrogation, later stated that he was prepared to admit to killing God if asked. Among the many Knights who confessed to the charges were Grand Master Jacques de Molay and other senior members of the order.

Philip's choice to pursue a charge of heresy may seem strange from a modern perspective – especially as many still believed the order to be godly. Surely a cynical, scheming monarch could

have more easily accused the order of abuse of power or financial misconduct?

But Philip knew what he was doing: heresy was a strong charge in the Middle Ages. Once someone was accused of heresy, they had almost no chance of being acquitted. The only defence was if the accuser could be proven to be a personal enemy of

the accused – but that was hardly possible when it was the king himself making the accusations. At the same time, no one wanted to defend someone who was facing a charge of heresy, because they were likely to be tried, too.

However, a charge of heresy did not automatically equate to a death sentence: a sinner who confessed heresy and repented

often received absolution. The guilty party would still face harsh punishment, but they usually avoided death. On the other hand, for those who refused to confess, death – preferably by fire – was the only outcome. Since ancient times, flames had been viewed as a way of purging the soul of evil, so it was the clear sentencing choice for heretics and sinners in the medieval world.

Once a confession had been made, often during torture, there was no point in trying to take back what had been said: heretics, who confessed and then changed their minds, were considered to have re-sinned, in which case death by fire was the obvious 14th-century solution.

Regents refused to follow suit

While hundreds of Knights Templar broke under torture in the months following the king's raids on 13th October, there is much to suggest that some of the order's Knights went into hiding.

The fate of those who escaped arrest is surrounded by mystery. There is no solid evidence of the order's continuation, but over the past few years historians have unearthed evidence that suggests several of the Knights escaped. One of the key points for historians is that although the arrests seemed to come as a surprise, events indicate that the order may have been forewarned. Digging into the archives, it seems that Grand Master Jacques de Molay issued a series of unusual orders shortly before Friday 13th October.

He burned the order's rule books and important accounts – possibly because the

Philip knew what he was doing: heresy was a strong charge. If someone was accused of heresy, they had almost no chance of being acquitted





Lost document absolved the church

For centuries researchers suspected that the original Chinon Parchment still existed. In 2001 the document was finally relocated in the Vatican's archives. Italian palaeographer Barbara Frale who found the manuscript immediately set out to analyse the text and discover if the parchment was really 700 years old.

The Chinon Parchment, which is **named after the city where the manuscript was written**, is crucial in discovering who conspired against the Knights Templar. According to the parchment, Pope Clement V completely forgave the Knights their sins and overturned the verdicts of excommunication that had previously been handed out to the grand master and four other senior Knights. Thus, the church was not part of the conspiracy.

After analysing the ink, parchment and writing style, Frale is almost **100 percent certain that the document is genuine**. The layout corresponds to common practice in the Middle Ages, just as the language and word choice are typical of other documents from the same period that were prepared by the Cancellaria Apostolica, a kind of papal secretariat.

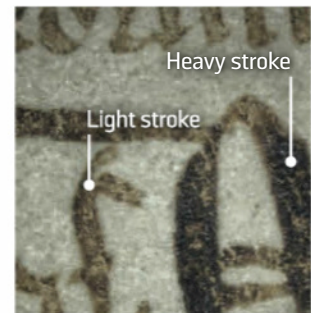
The document was dated 17th–20th August 1308 and written in Chinon, south-west of Paris.

The text stated that the pope absolved de Molay and other leading Knights of all sins and allowed them to re-enter the Catholic Church.

Three witnesses signed the Chinon Parchment in addition to the author, notary Robert de Condet.

Writing was easy to read after 700 years

1 The parchment was written with iron gall ink, which became common in the Middle Ages and displaced an earlier type made from carbon. The new ink was extremely durable, meaning the manuscript could still be easily read after 700 years.



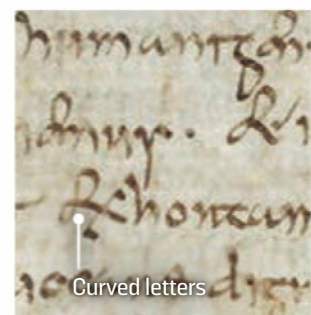
The fibres came from animal skin

2 The parchment itself is made from animal skins. Fur was widely used by the Cancellaria Apostolica, which was responsible for the preparation of papal letters. Parchment was expensive, which may explain why the document is so tightly written.



The style matched expectations

3 The Chinon Parchment was written in Latin, which was used in all official papal documents. Frale compared the writing style and word choice with other documents of the period and found a near-perfect match.



The Chinon Parchment is a thorough description of the Templars' trial.

Barbara Frale is employed by the Vatican Archives and discovered the Chinon Parchment by chance.



Equipment | Shield

WOOD
The shield was approximately 70 cm high and made of hardwood.

LEATHER
Stiff, boiled leather gave the shield extra strength.



documents contained compromising information. Significantly, Philip's bailiffs also found little of value in the Knights' temples and preceptories – even the relics had gone. It seems unlikely that an order as wealthy as the Knights Templar had so few valuables, which suggests that the Knights must have hidden their treasures before Philip's men arrived.

The Templar fleet also vanished. Based in the French coastal town of La Rochelle, the naval force

was one of Europe's largest – powerful enough to control sea lanes in and around Europe.

Yet the navy disappeared from La Rochelle and history immediately after Philip's roundup. The seafaring Knights must have set sail, and historians suspect that they had at least part of the Knights' treasure on board when they did. But where the ships went, no one knows for sure.

Fleet sailed to Portugal?

Historians do know that a number Europe's rulers granted amnesty to the fleeing Knights Templar. One of them was King Dinis of Portugal (1261-1325), who refused to give in to pressure from Philip to try the Knights. On the contrary, he welcomed the fugitives. It's therefore possible that the fleet may have found a new home there.

Dinis is considered to be the monarch who laid the foundation for Portugal becoming a maritime nation. By 1293 he had already instituted a system of naval insurance for Portuguese merchants working in Flanders. Trade agreements with Genoa, Florence and Venice followed. Over the next 200 years, the small country on the edge of Europe developed into a mighty naval power. It was at the forefront of exploration and discovered a sea route to India, which enabled it to control trade with the East. It's possible that Portugal's maritime development was given a boost thanks to taking in the Templars' ships and captains. In 1319, King Dinis founded the Order of the Knights of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Often referred to as the Knights of Christ, the new order bore a striking resemblance to De Molay's persecuted brotherhood. Its emblem – a white cross with a red outline – was virtually identical to that used by the Templars.

The Knights of Christ attracted surviving Knights Templar from all over Europe and likely continued many of their practices. The new order led Portugal's voyages of discovery and

From the arrests to the bonfire

1307

King Philip IV of France orchestrates the arrest of Knights Templar across the country. The order's brothers are thrown in jail and charged with homosexuality and heresy. Under torture, most confess.

1308

The pope absolves Jacques de Molay and other senior Knights of their sins. The Knights' faults are deemed to be minor, and the pope re-admits all the order's brothers into the Catholic Church.

1310

Having avoided arrest, a canon lawyer for the Knights Templar, Pierre de Bologna, takes on the order's defence. But after lodging a series of formal defences, he disappears – probably killed by Philip's men.



Jacques de Molay, the last grand master, confessed under torture, but later denied having made any such admissions.

The Pope's envoy subjected the Knights Templar to lengthy interrogations.

won treasures and territory for its newly adopted homeland. The brothers also gained influential military and government positions. The order still exists today as the Military Order of Christ.

Switzerland became a banking Mecca

Fugitive Knights Templar may also have sought refuge in Switzerland, which was one of Europe's most inaccessible areas at the time with a mountainous landscape that offered plenty of

hiding places. During the 13th century, several cities and principalities there were granted a status known as imperial immediacy – that is, they were directly ruled by the Holy Roman Empire, rather than being under the authority of an intermediary, such as a noble or king. In 1291, three of these imperially governed communities signed a federal charter that detailed the terms of their new military and judicial alliance. This was the start of the Old Swiss Confederacy. ►

1311

The final hearings in the Knights Templar case are over. The Pope, Clement V, has ensured that he alone can judge the order and its brothers. The decision process is drawn out.

1312

Clement V officially dissolves the order of the Knights Templar. The Pope's bull, *Vox in excelso*, is issued as the result of pressure by Philip. Later, the Pope also orders the Knights' properties confiscated.

1314

The order's last grand master, Jacques de Molay, is burned at the stake. The execution is ordered by Philip following de Molay's decision to deny his confession before a Parisian crowd.

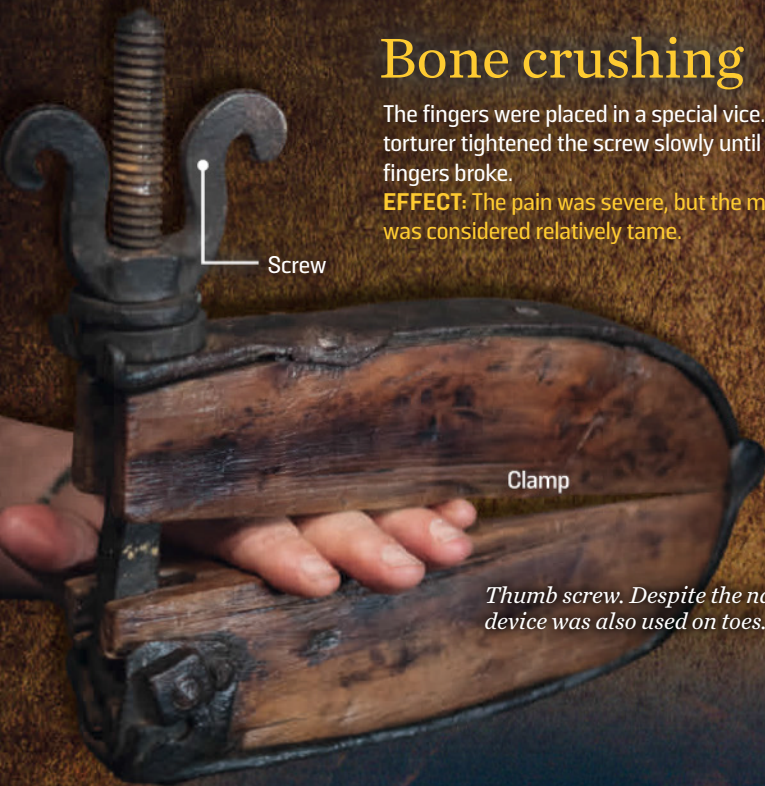
Templars were tortured

In 1252, in a bull known *Ad extirpanda*, Pope Innocent IV decreed that torture could be used by the Inquisition. As a result the Knights Templar were tortured until almost every brother in the order broke.

Bone crushing

The fingers were placed in a special vice. The torturer tightened the screw slowly until the fingers broke.

EFFECT: The pain was severe, but the method was considered relatively tame.



Screw

Clamp

Thumb screw. Despite the name this device was also used on toes.

Foot burning

The victim's feet were coated with fat so that they would roast slowly. Then he was laid down and his legs were clamped in position so that his feet were above a charcoal bonfire. Then the fire was lit.

EFFECT: The feet roasted slowly. The pain was unbearable and almost always led to a confession.



Charcoal fires burned slowly, which gave the torturers plenty of time to make the victim confess.

Strappado

The victim's hands were tied behind his back. His body was then winched up by his wrists. The torturer then repeatedly dropped the victim.

EFFECT: The shoulders became dislocated and the body suffered severe lesions. This method could not usually be used for more than an hour, otherwise the victim was likely to die.

Iron Ring

Rope

Weight

Medieval torture chambers were kept deliberately dark to help scare victims into making quick confessions.

Within a surprisingly short space of time, the confederacy came to command the best soldiers on the continent. Local folklore from the St Gotthard area speaks about white-clad knights who helped local forces fight for independence against Austria's Duke Leopold I at the Battle of Morgarten in 1315.

Although the enemy's strength has been estimated at over 2,000 knights and 7,000 foot soldiers, the confederates won with just 1,500 men – thanks to some innovative new tactics and a new weapon: the halberd. The description of the foreign knights coupled with the Swiss peasants' sudden military genius poses questions of whether some Knights Templar found new employment in the mountains.

Centuries later, Switzerland also became the heart of a secretive banking system – again, it's possible that the Knights' experience in finance could have helped to provide the foundation for these new Swiss banks, especially if some of the Templar order's vast wealth had helped provide the capital required to underwrite the industry. However, the country's first private bank – Wegelin & Co – didn't open until 1741, so it's difficult to substantiate such a claim.

Order lived on in the Highlands

Elsewhere in Europe, the continued presence of the Knights Templar after the official dissolution of the order is more obvious. The rulers of Aragon in northern Spain had always been enthusiastic supporters of the brotherhood, and in 1312 King James II of Aragon created the Second Order of Montesa, which included many of the local Knights Templar. In 1317, the new order received Pope John XXII's official sanction.

Scotland, too, has long been considered a possible refuge for the Knights. Although remote, the Highlands had always been a core area for the Knights Templar and, unlike other European countries, the brothers there were never prosecuted. The transfer of the Templars' riches to the Hospitallers was also slower in Scotland than elsewhere.

As part of the dissolution of the Templars by Pope Clement V in 1312, the Knight's possessions were to be handed to the Hospitallers. However, documents show that a number of properties in Scotland were only ceded to that order in the 1340s, which means that the Templars could have

remained active for decades after their official dissolution. Some theorise that the Knights Templar later formed various Scottish military organisations, including *Le Garde Écossaise* (The Scots Guard), which was founded in 1418 as bodyguards for the French king.

The Knights Templar are also mentioned in a document signed by James IV of Scotland in 1488. The order may have officially ceased to exist elsewhere in Europe, but the document proves that it was active in Scotland long after 1307.

Scotland is also home to the legendary Rosslyn Chapel, which lies 10 kilometres south of Edinburgh. Although construction began in 1456, the church bears clear references to the Knights Templar: a Templar seal featuring two knights on

one horse appears in the richly decorated building. Some even believe that the Templars' lost treasures must be hidden in – or under – the mysterious chapel.

” According to the Chinon Parchment, several knights claimed that they had spit on the cross during their initiation

Philip needed the pope

Although it is difficult to prove what happened to the fugitive Knights Templar after 1307, there is no doubt that those who escaped Philip's raids fared better

than their arrested brothers.

While the prisoners were subjected to horrific torture in Philip's dungeons, France's king schemed to bring about the order's final demise. Although Philip was a powerful monarch in medieval Europe, he couldn't destroy the Knights Templar on his own: he needed the backing of the pope and the **Catholic Church** to finish them off. This was why Philip had been careful to ensure that the arrests had been carried out in accordance with the wishes of the pope's own inquisitor and official envoy to France, William of Paris.

At times, Philip tried to claim that the pope himself had approved the charges against the Knights Templar, but there's no evidence to support this. Philip had contacted Clement V ahead of the raids and attempted to convince him that the order was involved in all sorts of heretical activity, but the pope refused to believe it. On 24th August 1307, six weeks before the arrests took place, Clement V wrote to the French king telling him that “we could scarcely bring our mind to believe what was said” alluding to their previous discussion of the matter. The unconvinced pope ordered Philip to take no precipitate action in the case, although he did agree to set up his own inquiry in due course. Irked by what he ➤

CATHOLIC CHURCH

was responsible for all litigation in religious matters. The Inquisition had been created in 1231 for that purpose.



According to eyewitness accounts, Jacques de Molay met his death on the fire without a sound.

saw as inconvenient prevarication on the part of the pope, Philip ordered the arrests in October, claiming he'd had no choice as he needed to stop the spread of heresy.

Forced into action by Philip's arrests and the confessions extracted from the Knights under torture, the pope dispatched two cardinals to France. On 24th December 1307, the imprisoned Grand Master Jacques de Molay was brought before a papal commission. But with no torture instruments in sight, the grand master denied his previous admissions.

Lost document's revelations

Philip wasn't about to give up. In June 1308, he had 72 Knights Templar confess their sins in front of another papal commission. The new admissions put the pope under greater pressure and in the late summer of the same year, he sent three senior cardinals to the city of **Chinon** in France to re-interrogate de Molay and four other leading Knights.

The event was chronicled in detail in the Chinon Parchment, a document that disappeared in the

17th century. By chance, Italian palaeographer Barbara Frale recently rediscovered the 700-year-old document in the Vatican's archives. Dated 17th-20th August 1308, the document, which had been misfiled among 17th century documents, sheds light on the story of the Knights Templar hearings and reveals to what degree the Church was culpable for its downfall.

The Chinon Parchment reveals that the 1308 interrogations were conducted without torture. Contrary to popular belief at the time, the leaders of the Catholic Church were well aware that confessions made during torture could not to be trusted.

According to the parchment, even without the threat of torture, several Knights still confessed to spitting on or on the ground adjacent to the cross during their initiation. While one brother, Hugo de Pérraud, claimed that "after they were admitted and given the cloaks of the order, [another brother] ordered them to denounce the crucifix and to kiss him at the bottom of the back, in the navel and then on the mouth". The brother giving the orders in this case was Hugo's own father, Hubert.

These confessions, obtained without torture, were deeply shocking to the church, and according to the Chinon Parchment, led the cardinals to conclude that the order was guilty of the charges Philip had suggested. But some historians believe that is an overly simplistic interpretation of the findings. They argue that the rituals described are likely rooted in the *Latin Rule* established by the first grand master, Hugues de Payens, who wanted to "Test the soul to see if it comes from God". According to this theory, spitting on the crucifix may have been a way of testing to see if the knights could cope with actions that might be forced upon them if they were captured by the Muslims. Essentially, this bizarre initiation rite was intended as an exercise in denying God in action, but not in the heart.

True or not, the pope's envoys seemingly found some sound rationale behind the ceremony, because, according to the Chinon Parchment, Cardinal Bérenger Fredoli and his colleagues forgave all the brothers' sins and allowed them to rejoin the Catholic Church.

The Chinon Parchment suggests that, at this point at least, the pope understood and forgave the actions of the Knights Templar, meaning that the French king acted alone in plotting against them. This interpretation of the events is confirmed by the fact that Philip continued to pursue the case despite the Templars having received absolution. As time and the hearings dragged

CHINON

was where Grand Master Jacques de Molay was imprisoned until he was moved to Château de Gisors.



MYTH BUSTER

The curse

King and pope were cursed at the stake

At the bonfire de Molay was alleged to have said that Philip IV and Clement V would both meet him in Heaven before 366 days had passed. Within a year, both were dead and the legend of the curse grew.

As Jacques de Molay was led towards the bonfire on Île des Juifs with Geoffrey de Charney in 1314, the grand master reportedly shouted to the assembled crowd in Paris that before one year and one day had passed, King Philip of France and Pope Clement V would answer for their crimes before God.

Historians today are not convinced that Jacques de Molay really issued any such curse as no contemporary sources mention the grand master making such a statement.

It seems far more probable that the story was fabricated later after both King Philip and Pope Clement V had died within a year of the executions. Medieval supporters of the Knights may well have spun the story to retroactively put the words into de Molay's mouth.

Whatever its origins, the myth seems to have spread throughout Europe in the years following the executions. For example, American historian Henry Charles Lea claimed that German citizens viewed Philip's death as God's retribution for having brought charges against the Knights Templar. While it might seem unlikely that people would be prepared to accept such a story at face value, it's perhaps less surprising when you consider the widespread belief in divine justice in the medieval period.

But was it just a coincidence that those responsible for the Templars' persecution, torture and execution died shortly afterwards? Or was

there something more sinister in their deaths?

Philip IV died on 29th November 1314. He

was 46 years old and his death followed a hunting accident a few weeks earlier near Pont-Sainte-Maxence in northern France.

The events surrounding the accident are unclear. According to some sources, the king was attacked by a boar while others claim that he simply fell off his horse. In any case, after the accident, the king showed symptoms that suggest he suffered a fit. Following the incident, Philip was taken to his birthplace, Fontainebleau, near Paris, and seemed to be recovering when he died suddenly.

Historians now believe that the most likely cause of death was a stroke. Seizures are common following a stroke and death can occur unexpectedly if there's a subsequent brain haemorrhage.

Pope Clement V died on 20th April 1314, just one month after Jacques de Molay. The pope was about 50 years old and had been battling cancer for many years. Throughout his reign, he had struggled because of ill health. His death came as no surprise and was, of course, natural.

MYTH IN BRIEF

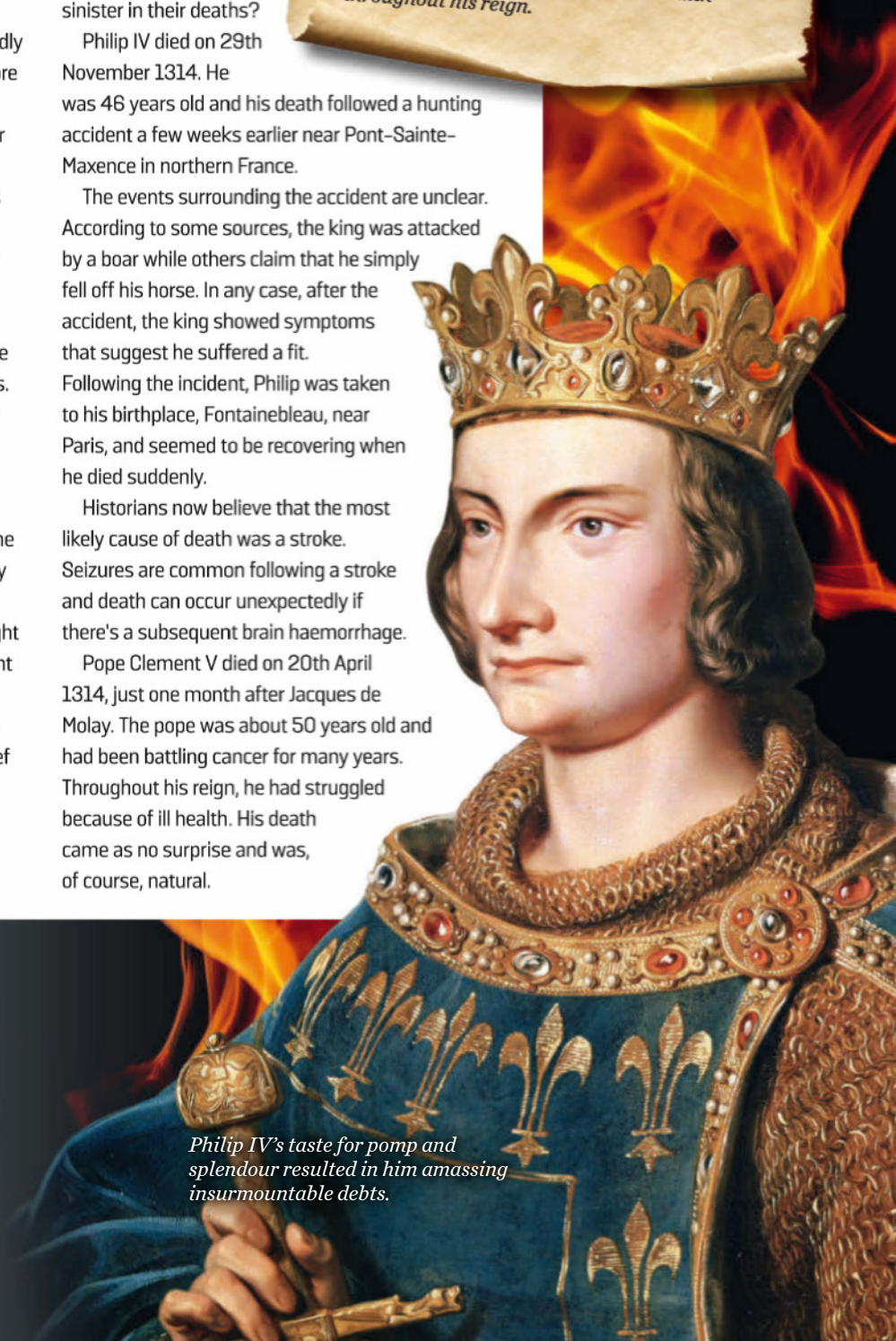
King Philip IV and Pope Clement V had to pay with their lives for their betrayal of the Knights Templar when Grand Master Jacques de Molay cursed them both: Philip had charged the order with heresy and the pope had failed to protect his faithful Knights.



Pope Clement V was plagued by ill health throughout his reign.

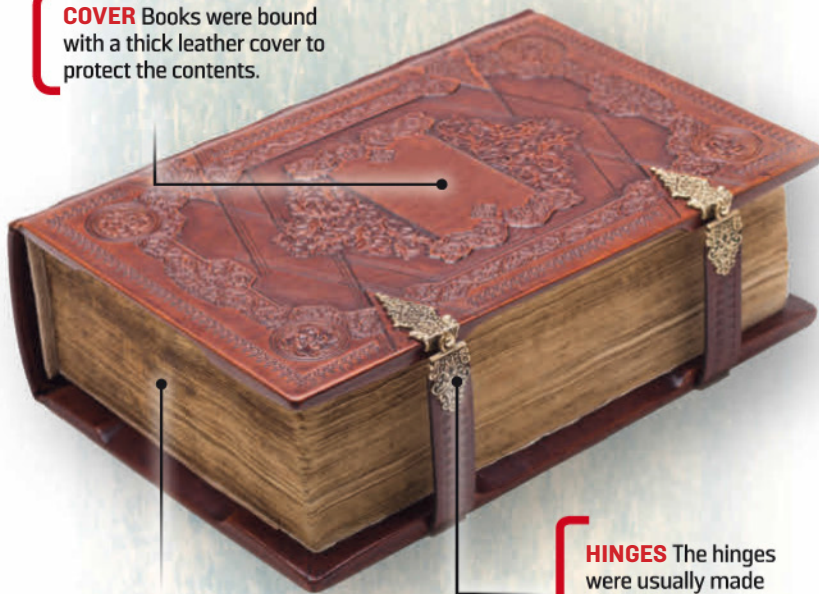
“ The king probably died from a stroke, while the pope had suffered from cancer for many years and had been expected to die.

Philip IV's taste for pomp and splendour resulted in him amassing insurmountable debts.



Equipment | Templar bible

COVER Books were bound with a thick leather cover to protect the contents.



CONTENTS Before the printing press, all Bibles were hand crafted – usually by skilled monks.

HINGES The hinges were usually made of metal – in some cases even gold.

PHILIP THE FAIR

was often at odds with the Catholic Church. The king was instrumental in moving the papal seat from Rome to Avignon in France between 1309 and 1377.

on, the Knights found it harder to fend off the king's accusations and many slowly broke down.

In 1311, the hearings finally finished. It was time to decide the fate of the order. Formally, the decision was up to the pope, but Philip made it clear that France might sever its links with the Catholic Church if the ruling went against him – something that the Holy See was keen to avoid. The pope caved in. In March 1312, Clement V issued a papal bull that officially dissolved the Knights Templar order. The pope, however, never condemned the order; he simply ruled that the Knighthood's reputation was too damaged for it to continue.

All that remained was the finale. On the morning of 18th March 1314, Jacques de Molay was collected from his prison cell in Paris along with three other senior Templar figures and led to a scaffold that had been set up in front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral. It was a stage and the drama had already been written. De Molay was there to confess heresy, but after listening to a cardinal read the verdict, Jacques de Molay proclaimed in a clear voice that his confessions had been false. Geoffroy de Charney, the leader of the order in Normandy, quickly followed with his own denials.

Confusion reigned. The cardinals and officials retreated to consider the situation. When news

of the Templars' retraction reached Philip, he was furious. The plan had been for the Knights to make a full, public confession before spending the rest of their days behind bars – the standard punishment for heretics who had confessed. But Jacques de Molay and Geoffroy de Charney had torn up the script. Worried about possible consequences, Philip acted quickly. According to case law, the Knights' denials could be viewed as confirmation that they had fallen back into sin. The king sentenced de Molay and de Charney to be burned at the stake.

By late afternoon, the pair were on top of a small bonfire on the Île des Juifs. De Molay asked to face Notre-Dame and to have his hands free so that he could pray as he died. According to legend, the grand master shouted that Philip IV and Clement V would both meet him in God's company before a year had passed. The pope died 33 days later, while Philip survived for another eight months.

Royal execution was revenge

Although Philip did his best to sweep the Knights from history, his plan failed. In the centuries following the executions on the Île des Juifs, the memory of Grand Master Jacques de Molay and his proud Knights lived on in the minds of people throughout Europe and especially in France.

During the French Revolution on 21st January 1793 – 479 years after the burning of de Molay – France's deposed King Louis XVI was executed at Place de la Concord in Paris. He was a direct descendent of Philip IV.

At a little after 10.00, Louis mounted the scaffold and gave a short speech to the assembled crowd, forgiving those who had sentenced him. Then Louis was placed in the guillotine. At 10.15 the blade swept down and decapitated the former king. The crowd erupted in jubilation as the executioner held up Louis' head.

According to several sources, a man then jumped up onto the scaffold, dipped his fingers into the bucket containing the king's blood and holding it up to the crowd, cried out, "Jacques de Molay, thus you are avenged!"

A few years later, French Jesuit Augustine Barruel published a four-volume work in which he declared that some of the Knights Templar had sworn revenge after Philip's persecution of the order at the start of the 14th century. Barruel claimed that they nurtured apprentices through the ages, instructing them to continue the Knights' traditions. The Jesuit believed that the storming of the Bastille and destruction of the French monarchy was the order's final vengeance. ■

✓ WHAT WE DO KNOW

The Templar order was dissolved

- Most of the Knights in France **were arrested** in 1307.
- The order was **officially dissolved** by the pope in 1312.
- The last **grand master**, Jacques de Molay, was burned in 1314.
- The Knights confessed to **blasphemy and worshipping other gods**.
- The order's **possessions were seized**.
- Some Knights Templar **joined other orders**, especially the Hospitallers.

134

■ out of 138 Knights questioned in Paris confessed during their interrogation. Admissions included spitting on the cross, denying Christ, worshipping a head called Baphomet, and having sex with other brothers.

? WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

What was Philip's motive?

1 The king of France owed huge sums to the Knights Templar. If the order suddenly disappeared, so too would Philip's debts. At the same time, the deeply religious king may have been genuinely concerned

about what he perceived as wicked activities going on behind the Templars' closed doors. Historians are not sure which reason motivated him to have the Templars arrested – or if there may have been a third reason.

What became of the Templar fleet?

2 The Knights Templar had both a military and a merchant navy. These comprised its Atlantic fleet, which was based in the French port city of La Rochelle. Following the arrests, the fleet vanished. Unlike gold and relics which can be buried for subsequent retrieval, a flotilla of ships cannot be easily hidden. The fleet must have sailed somewhere, and while Portugal seems a likely destination, no one knows for sure where the armada landed.

Did the Knights' order go underground after its dissolution?

3 The Knights Templar were dissolved in 1312 by papal decree. Nevertheless, rumours have continued to circulate ever since

that the order continued to exist in secret. Scotland is suspected of being a haven for the persecuted Knights. The Highlands were far from European courts, and the order already had a strong presence in the country. Documents suggest that the Knights continued to operate there after the papal bull was issued, but the mystery has never been fully resolved.



Scotland's King Robert the Bruce may have hired fugitive Knights to help in his fight against the English crown.

The Knights Templar favoured powerful, heavy warhorses that could inflict serious damage on the enemy in battle.



MEDIEVAL WAR MACHINE

For more than 100 years, the Knights Templars' crack troops have vanquished all enemies.

The secret to their success is both access to the era's most accomplished weaponsmiths as well as a fearless veteran force willing to give their lives for God.

Saladin watched with increasing unease as the enemy approached. The Sultan of Egypt and Syria looked on as a cloud of men, horses and dust roared towards his army. The earth shook under the horses' heavy hooves as the enemy spurred them into a gallop.

Saladin's Muslim warriors unleashed a rallying cry and fired a swarm of arrows at the approaching enemy – to no effect. Wearing heavy armour covered by fluttering white surcoats with blood-red crosses on their chests, the Knights Templar continued their charge. Around 50 metres before the first line of Muslim defence, the Knights lowered their lances. Sources say that the Knights were “so close together that an apple thrown into their midst would not fall to the ground without touching people or horses”.

Their lances lowered, the Knights smashed into Saladin's defensive line. The Muslims tried to protect themselves, but their wooden shields shattered beneath the horses' hooves. Confused, the defenders tried to rally to their leader, but the Knights Templar seemed to be everywhere.

In the ensuing chaos, the Knights swung down from their horses with swords blazing. Their horses' anxious whinnies mixed with the sounds

of crashing blades and the screams of the wounded and dying. In horror, Saladin saw his supposedly invincible soldiers flee in panic all around him. The battle had been lost.

Saladin fled on a camel

The Islamic forces' defeat on 25th November 1177 at the **Battle of Montgisard** in Jerusalem (now part of Israel) came as a shock to Saladin. His aim – to advance to Jerusalem and wrest the Holy City from Christian hands – seemed simple at the start of the campaign. Saladin, one of the most-respected military leaders of his time, possessed a strength that was, by and large, far superior to the Christians'.

Historians don't know the exact number of soldiers, but some sources claim the Muslims mustered 26,000 men while the Christian forces numbered a mere 375 Knights. There were almost certainly more soldiers available to the Christians in the form of sergeants (soldiers who assisted the Knights) and mercenaries. Despite this, Saladin's forces were still far more numerous and everything pointed to a Muslim victory until the Christians unleashed their stunning attack.

A pilgrim who witnessed the rout first hand reported that “Saladin was smitten with admiration, seeing his men dispersed everywhere, everywhere turned in flight, ➤

Sources indicate the Muslims could muster 26,000 men while Christian forces numbered a mere 375 Knights.

BATTLE OF MONTGISARD

took place at a time when Saladin was close to conquering the entire Middle East. The commander was stunned by a small Christian force, and the battle ended in a huge defeat, with Saladin forced to flee back to Egypt having lost 90 percent of his army in the battle.

everywhere given to the mouth of the sword. He took thought for his own safety and fled, throwing off his mailshirt for speed, mounted a racing camel and barely escaped with a few of his men.”

The victory at Montgisard was no one-off. In the 12th century, the Knights Templar gained a reputation for being an invincible elite force. Muslim warriors in the Holy Land had no answer to their powerful, tight-knit attacking formations.

The signal to lower a Knight's lance was given 50 metres from the enemy.

The order's dominance on the battlefield put the Knights Templar in the same league as a number of other elite forces

throughout history, including Rome's legions, Genghis Khan's hordes, and Hitler's armoured divisions. For around a hundred years, and with a force of just a few thousand men, the Knights managed to successfully defend a large territory thousands of kilometres from their homelands.

Knights fashioned their own weapons

The secret to the Knights Templars' success was a combination of factors: superior weapons and armour, vast combat experience and – not least – many years of religious indoctrination. Historians believe it all stemmed from the order's favoured status, which enabled it to amass a huge income.

As defender of the Holy Land, the Knights Templar was considered a supreme force. Its special status afforded the Knighthood the luxury of equipping themselves with the best equipment when going to war. Some weapons were given as gifts from nobles, clerics and other similarly wealthy supporters in Europe, while others were sourced from raids. But the vast bulk of weaponry employed by the



Knights were manufactured in their own armouries and workshops. They employed the most-talented artisans of the Middle Ages, and bladesmiths, leathersmiths and other specialists kept their own workshops in the Knights' castles. The courtyards resounded to the sound of hammer blows, while the smell of tanned leather hung in the air.

The process of manufacturing weapons in the Middle Ages required good raw materials, specialist tools and, above all, skilled craftsmen. The Knights' unique broadswords required a skilled smith who'd mastered the complete process from manufacturing the steel to the special banking method that guaranteed a strong yet balanced and supple sword. The bladesmith required quality steel that he either made himself or bought from steel merchants. The work began with heating up the steel before the molten metal was hammered into the shape of the blade. The blade's thickness and length, as well as the construction of the shaft, were critically important; a sword whose blade was too long or too short relative to its thickness would be useless to the Knight.

The subsequent job of grinding and hardening the sword by first heating and then rapidly cooling the metal in water or oil also required considerable expertise. There was no means to precisely measure the temperature or time the process, meaning bladesmiths had to judge the state of the metal by its appearance, including its colour.

Once the sword was finished, the smith handed it to the grand master or a marshal who checked its quality. The

Knights Templars' broadswords were usually relatively long – around 90 centimetres – but rarely weighed more than 1.5 kg. The light weight made it easy for Knights to wield the weapon both on foot and from horseback.

A Knight's sword was always double-edged – that is,

sharp on both sides.

There was no need for bladesmiths to adorn the swords with embellishments, which the Knighthood prohibited. According to the Templars' own code of conduct, the *Latin Rule*,

Rank | Mercenary



TYPICALLY OF Middle Eastern descent, he spoke the local language and knew the area.

HIS BOW was a regular longbow as opposed to the Knights' crossbow.

HIS ARMOUR was only light, or he wore no protection at all.

any kind of decoration or embellishment ran contrary to the true faith.

Making **the lance** also demanded perfection, for it was the Knight's most important weapon. Lances were used to break through enemy lines, throw enemies from their horses and generally create chaos and destruction. Knight Templar lances were four metres long and cut from ash – a wood known for its strength and flexibility. The lance's long, pointed head was forged from iron. In addition to the sword and lance, Knights were also equipped for close combat with a mace and three knives of different lengths.

THE LANCE was originally lightweight and suitable for throwing but grew in length and weight to become the Knights' favoured shock weapon.

Crossbow was upgraded

The Knights also brought crossbows – the most advanced weapon of the 12th century – onto the field with them. The weapon was basically an improved bow that benefited from an advanced, reinforced firing mechanism. It was easy to operate and extremely powerful. Arrows could pierce chain mail and kill an enemy wearing even the thickest armour. Crossbows were originally made from wood, but historians believe the warrior monks of the mid-12th century used the new version, which was made from composite materials including horn.

Composite bows were both smaller and lighter and therefore easier to transport over ➤

long distances in the field throughout the Holy Land. The crossbow was traditionally used by foot soldiers but could also be fired from horseback by trained Knights.

Smiths were master craftsmen

Only smiths who'd been apprenticed to a skilled master before practicing for many years were able to produce weapons to the Knights' exacting standards – and the same was true in the production of armour and shields. In addition to a long period of training, weaponsmiths and metallurgists also relied on feedback from their patrons, the Knights.

Battlefield experiences were relayed by the marshal, the Knights' equivalent of a modern-day general. He was solely responsible for all the Knights Templar's equipment, including weaponry. The order's strict hierarchy also applied

when liaising with the craftsmen. Individual Knights were denied entry to the smithy; instead, all weapons were inspected by the marshal, who served both as field commander and as general manager of the Templars' fortresses and castles. He was also tasked with distributing swords, lances and armour to each Knight.

The marshal's managerial responsibilities didn't stop there. He also had overall control of the Knights' horses – a much bigger task, as each Knight required three: two heavier warhorses, known as destriers, for use on the battlefield, and one lighter horse to ride during the long marches

in the Holy Land. In addition, each Knight was entitled to a mule to carry his equipment.

One thing that distinguished the Knights from their Muslim enemy was the choice of horse. The Knights Templar looked for horses that could amplify the order's shock tactics. Therefore, the

” Templars preferred horses with raw strength, such as Frisian horses known for their broad chests and muscular bodies.

Insight | Knights Templars tactics

Blitzkrieg in the Middle Ages

Hundreds of heavily armed, mounted Knights hammered at the enemy's weakest point in what became the Templars' favourite military tactic.

The Knights Templar marched in rigid formation. At the moment that scouts detected the enemy, the Knights split into small units called squadrons, each comprising around 25 heavily armed men who gathered around the squadron's own banner. Squadrons then prepared for an onslaught with one sole purpose: to break through the enemy's lines and create havoc.

This shock tactic was feared by the enemy – and for good reason. This mass of Knights and their warhorses usually smashed through the opponent's line in one unstoppable movement. From there, the Knights and their sergeants quickly defeated the fractured and often-panicked enemy.

March takes place in strict formation

Knights and squires ride closely together.

The Knight is forbidden to lose sight of his weapons and armour, so each Knight lets his squire ride immediately in front with the spare horses and heavily loaded pack animals.

The marshal rides in front with the under marshal, who carries the piebald banner, directly behind him.



Sergeants come last. They form the army's rearguard to provide protection from ambush.

A bodyguard of ten Knights protects the marshal on his flanks.

The scouts keep lookout. Local mercenaries know the area and are sent on ahead.

warhorses used in battle were not particularly fast, agile or sleek – unlike the animals favoured by the Arabs. Templars preferred horses with raw strength and plenty of muscle power, such as Frisian horses known for their broad chests and muscular bodies.

“When the battle is at hand, they arm themselves interiorly with faith and exteriorly with steel rather than decorate themselves with gold, since their business is to strike fear in the enemy rather than to incite his cupidity,” wrote Abbot Bernard de Clairvaux who helped pen the *Latin Rule*, a crucial set of guidelines and principles that served as the Knights’ rulebook. “They seek out horses which are strong and swift, rather than those which are brilliant and well-plumed, they set their minds on fighting to win rather than on parading for show. They think not of glory and seek to be formidable rather than flamboyant.”

The horses, like mules and other draft animals, were transported to the Holy Land by ship from Europe. Upon arrival, the horses were closely inspected – again by the marshal – and then

distributed among the Knights. Both horses and Knights were well protected by armour, but while this was essential equipment, it must have been an extremely uncomfortable experience in the Middle East’s scorching heat.

In fact, the Knights’ dress code – which demanded that the men wear wool and steel – was dictated by the *Latin Rule*. It specified that the Knight was expected to fully cover his legs and

Continues on page 45

Rank | Sergeant

A SERGEANT was typically of European descent, but rarely of noble blood.

HIS WEAPONS (sword and mace) were both suited to close combat.

THE BLACK SURCOAT was their exclusive uniform.

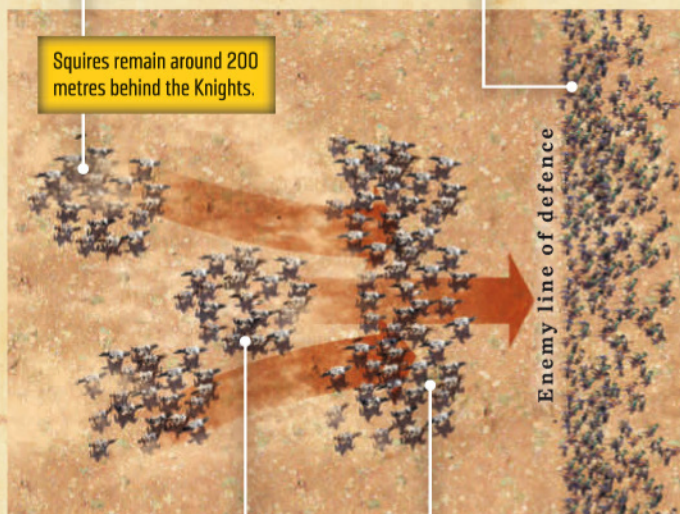


Squadrons thunder forward

1 Before the battle, tight-knit squadrons are formed with 20-25 Knights in each.

4 The enemy is mown down, as the Knights crash into its line with tremendous force, causing panic and chaos within the enemy's ranks.

Squires remain around 200 metres behind the Knights.



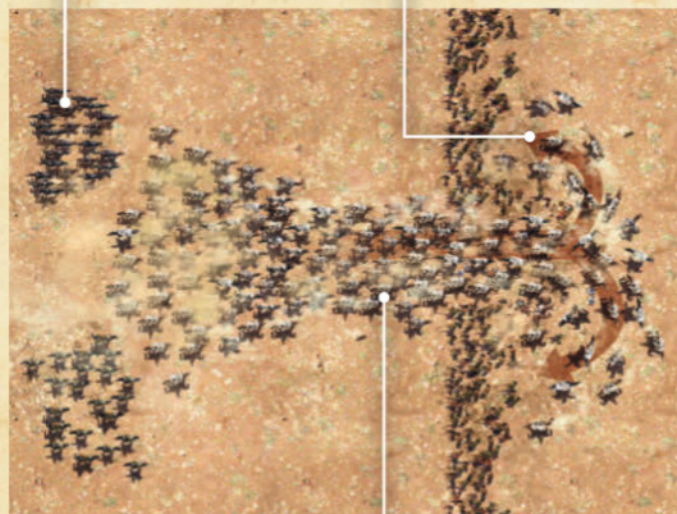
2 The army gathers around the marshal and the banner. In a tight formation, everyone rides towards the enemy at a light trot.

3 The Knights gallop toward the enemy's defensive line. The lances are lowered when the Knights are around 50 metres from the enemy.

The enemy is split in two and surrounded

1 Support troops are ready. If the Knights are beaten back, the sergeants and mercenaries ride forward to keep the enemy occupied while the Knights regroup.

3 Everyone fights to the last. The force fights until the enemy is wiped out or has fled – or the marshal lowers the banner.



2 Foot soldiers pour through the opening. After the Knights punch through the enemy line, sergeants and mercenaries storm through the opening to assist in the close combat that follows.



How are young people brainwashed into religious fanaticism?

The Knights Templars were fearless soldiers. Like modern-day radicalised soldiers, the Knights were willing to die for God. Scientists have identified how three factors make the brain susceptible to fanaticism. They believe that most of us can reach a point where we're willing to sacrifice ourselves on the battlefield – especially as teenagers.

UNDEVELOPED CRITICAL SENSE

Young people are more easily brainwashed

Young people are particularly susceptible to new ideas and influences, and at the same time, teenagers think in less complex and critical terms than adults. Both can make young people more susceptible to religious fanaticism – especially if the impulse is triggered by a respected adult. In his 2015 book *The Teenage Brain*, Frances Jensen – professor of neurology at the University

of Pennsylvania – explains how the teen's brain is undeveloped and can in some cases be alarmingly vulnerable to indoctrination by an authority figure. At the same time, the teen brain has comparatively more synapses, which makes it more receptive to new ideologies. This susceptibility and lack of critical thinking resulted in young men who were ready to die for God and the order.

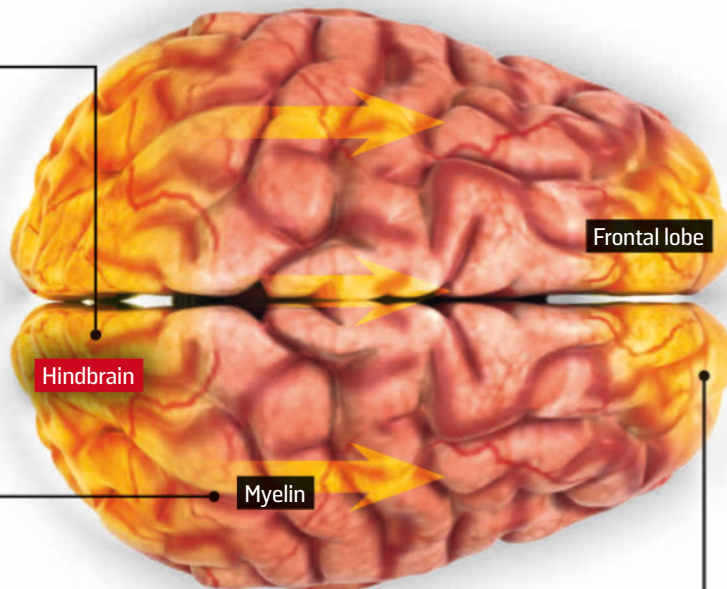
ORDER RECEIVED YOUNG WARRIORS

+ Although the Knights Templar did not officially enrol children, boys entered the order from the age of ten. The boys didn't become Knights immediately but were schooled in its doctrine of honour and instilled with religiosity.

+ Independent thinking and a critical mindset were frowned upon by the Knighthood.

Process starts at back

1 Communication in the brain is dependent on 'axons' – nerve fibres that enable the brain cells to message each other. This communication only becomes effective once the axons have been insulated by myelin. The process begins at the back of the brain and isn't completed until adulthood.



Fatty, insulating materials

2 Myelin is a white, fatty substance that forms a casing around the axons.

Frontal lobe is at the end of the queue

3 The insulating process reaches the prefrontal frontal cortexes last. This isn't fully developed until a person enters their twenties, and it's only then that humans are able to better integrate memory and experience into their decision-making.

Extremism damages the brain

The brain can be made more susceptible to extremism by taboos and outright bans, according to a hypothesis published by Polish physician Andrzej Brodziak of the Institute of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health in the *Journal of Neuroscience* in 2016.

Brodziak based his arguments on a 2012 study, which revealed an impairment in the frontal lobe in people with extreme religious

attitudes and were conditioned with a high degree of authoritarianism. This deficiency diminished their critical faculties.

Brodziak argues that changes may occur after prolonged influence in a culture characterised by taboos such as the Muslims' sharp divisions of *haram* (forbidden) and *halal* (allowed), or the strict code of the Knights Templar. He also believes that suppression of sexual impulses plays a key role, too.

RULES GOVERNED EVERYDAY LIFE

+ The Knights Templar lived by a detailed code that set rules for all aspects of everyday life.

+ Several activities were forbidden, and violations could result in punishment or even exclusion – these included pleasure, close contact with women and drinking.

+ Prayers had to be performed punctually.

Critical thinking is compromised

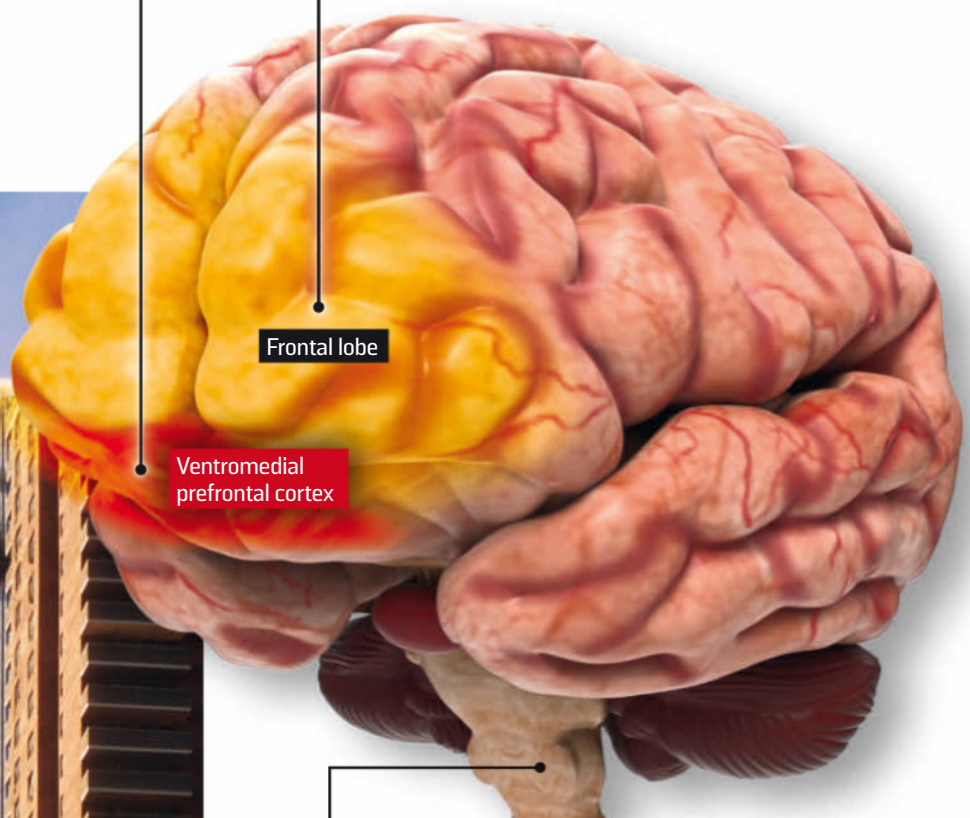
A The ventromedial prefrontal cortex affects one's ability to evaluate decisions and think critically. In a 2012 study, researchers from the University of Iowa could see that the area was impaired in people with extreme religious attitudes.

Logic vanishes

B The frontal lobe performs logical thinking and risk assessment. When this part of the brain is impaired, fanaticism can take hold.



In 2001, religious fanatics flew two planes into the World Trade Center in New York, killing around 3,000.



Decisions are passed on

C The brain stem connects the cerebrum and cerebellum to the spinal cord to ensure that the brain's decisions are transferred to the central nervous system.

Religion is a drug for the brain

Religion can trigger happiness in the same way that sex, drugs and fast food does, according to a study published by researchers at the University of Utah in November 2016.

Researchers examined 19 young Mormons – seven women and 12 men. The subjects were exposed to religious influences in various forms, from reading quotes from religious leaders to watching a movie with Biblical scenes and reading the Book of Mormon while a functional

MRI scanner recorded their brain activity. The experiment revealed that when the 19 youngsters felt a degree of spirituality, there was additional activity in the nucleus accumbens, which releases dopamine to trigger happiness. A similar reaction occurs with drugs and sex.

The prospect of a reward in the form of an increased state of happiness can stimulate people's desire to pursue strong religious experiences, which can in turn fuel fanaticism.

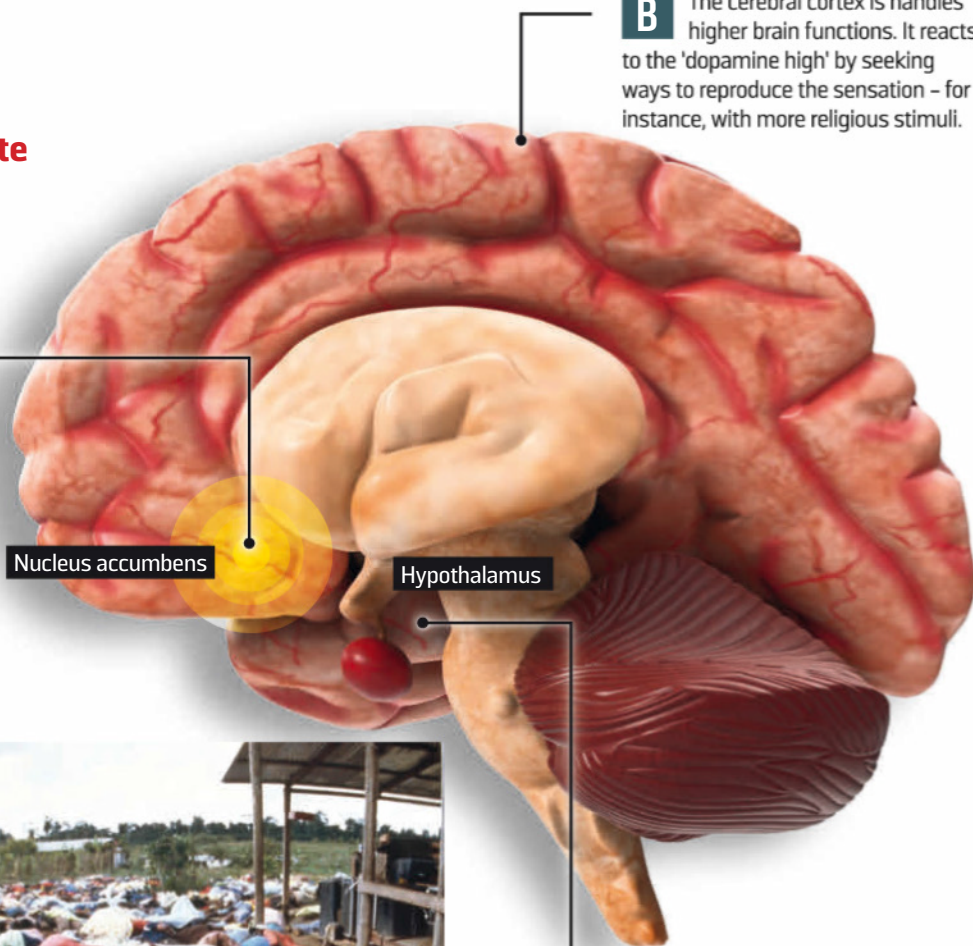
RELIGION PERMEATED EVERYTHING

+ The Knights Templar were convinced that they were guaranteed direct access to Heaven if they died for God on the battlefield.

+ Frequent masses and prayers filled everyday life, so thoughts of God and Christianity permeated the Knights' daily lives.

Reward is immediate

A Dopamine is a chemical that triggers feelings of pleasure. Its release is controlled by the nucleus accumbens in the brain. Researchers have seen that the area is triggered by religious events. The feeling of happiness can forge an addiction to spiritual experiences.



Emotions are processed

B The cerebral cortex handles higher brain functions. It reacts to the 'dopamine high' by seeking ways to reproduce the sensation – for instance, with more religious stimuli.



In November 1978, religious fervour seized members of the Jonestown cult, who collectively committed suicide in Guyana.

Sex and religion go together

C Sexual behaviour is controlled by the hypothalamus. Feelings of happiness, which often occur during sex, are closely related to the sensation of religious ecstasy.

feet with chain mail, worn over woollen leggings with additional protection in the form of leather thigh protectors.

The order of layers was slightly different for the upper body. Here, a woollen shirt was covered by a padded jerkin and finally a hauberk, a long-sleeved chain mail shirt and hood to protect the Knight. Hands and feet were similarly covered by chain mail, and the Knight also wore a helm to protect his forehead and nose or – in some cases – his entire face. Everything was worn in temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius, which made extreme physical demands on the body during battle.

Images of Knights in battle show that the horses were also covered in chain mail. Historians believe that this protection for horses was used from the late 12th century onwards, but that not all Knights took advantage of this option. While the armour protected the horse from the enemy's blades and arrows, it made it more vulnerable during combat due to its weight, which slowed the animal down.

Desert marches dragged on for days

Although the Knights were equipped for combat, all-out battles were rare. Most of their time was spent on long marches. The order's main purpose was to defend the Holy Land, the Knights' primary role to patrol the desert and pursue enemies.

The sturdy, durable horses were suitable for long marches along dusty roads and through rocky deserts. And there's no doubt that a Templar patrol's strength must have made a formidable sight: heavy warhorses plodded alongside Knights wearing their distinctive white robes with the red cross, followed by a large group of followers in the form of sergeants and auxiliaries.

A typical Templar force in the Holy Land consisted of around 1,500 men, of whom only 300 were actual Knights. Each Knight brought a squire, who helped to carry their weapons and equipment. In addition, the army included around 400 sergeants, private soldiers with no Knightly ancestry recruited from Europe, plus 500 local mercenaries.

The hired soldiers acted as scouts. Armed with scimitars, bows and crossbows, the mercenaries rode at the front to survey the terrain and locate the enemy. Troops could have both European and Middle Eastern backgrounds, but no matter where the individual soldier originated, he knew both the landscape and its people well. He also

spoke the local language so he could engage with the natives and possibly gain information about the enemy's movements.

At the front of the main force rode the marshal – closely followed by his under marshal. The two men were protected by a small force of around ten bodyguards, five on either side. The Knights followed the marshal and his retinue with their squires, who managed the Knights' spare horses as well as their draft animals. Each Knight and squire were permitted to bring one saddle bag for carrying their cups, flasks, bowls and spoons and other personal apparel; the Knight also carried his hauberk in a wire mesh bag. The *Latin Rule* forbade Knights from losing their baggage, so as a result, the Knight always rode behind the packhorse that carried his equipment during marches.

Piebald banner signalled battle

As soon as the scouts saw the enemy, the men turned their horses around and rode back to notify the marshal. If the commander decided to engage, the under marshal raised the Order's piebald (black and white) banner to signal that every Knight should prepare for battle.

With his squire's help, the Knight quickly donned his heavy armour and slung his shield over his neck to protect his chest. He then mounted his horse, at which point he was handed his helm and lance before joining the rest of his permanent **squadron** – a unit of 20-25 Knights – around its banner.

As the squadrons came together, the sergeants organised themselves around their leader, known as the turcopolier, a locally recruited archer who led the reserve troops on horseback. The squires withdrew with the spare horses, giving the squadrons room to advance. The Knights were the army's spearhead, and on a signal from the marshal would set off at a trot. Everything took place in complete silence and with perfect order.

"They go into battle in order and without making a noise," a pilgrim reported to the chronicler Ralph de Diceto following his trip to the Holy Land, which occurred sometime between 1167 and 1187.

The Knights had strict orders to maintain their position in the ranks, even when the opponent's arrows began to rain upon them.

"When they are established in squadrons, no brother should go from one squadron to another," the *Latin Rule* stated.

When the marshal's trumpet sounded the order to attack, the Knights spurred their horses ➤

” Many forces from the Middle Ages were little more than a motley collection of non-professionals or poorly equipped, untrained peasants.

SQUADRON

is derived from the Italian word *squadrare* – to do something square. It was the name given to the Knights' cavalry units; foot soldiers were divided into companies.

to a gallop and rode towards the enemy. This meticulous preparation was one of the Templars' keys to victory. Everyone knew exactly what to do as a result of thorough training and experience from previous battles.

For historians, there is no doubt that the Templars' discipline was critical to their success, while it also distinguished them from a typical medieval army. Many forces in the Middle Ages were little more than a motley collection of non-professionals or poorly equipped, untrained peasants. The Knights Templar created a professional military culture and established a whole new school of thinking that helped to lay the foundations for today's modern armies.

Disobedience meant eating with dogs

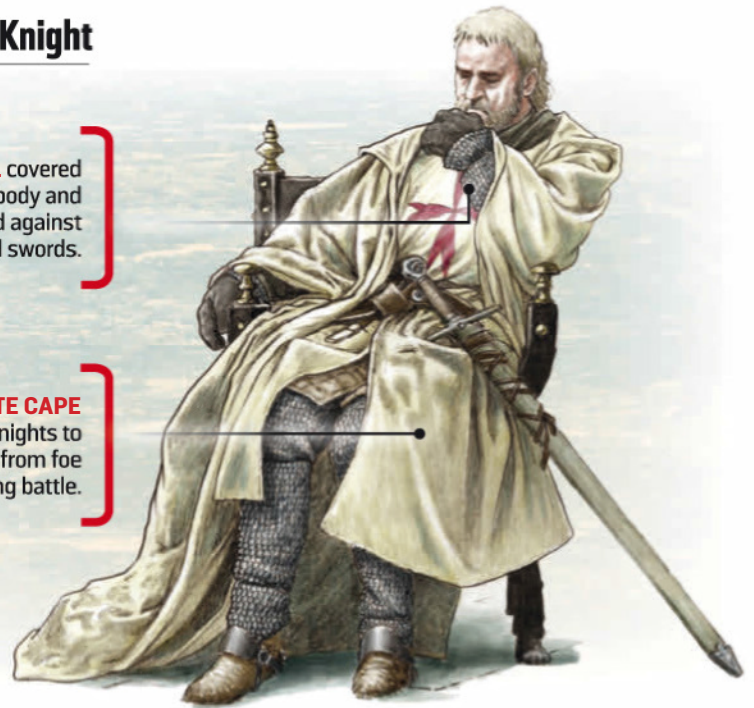
The Knights Templar who fought in the Holy Land also distinguished themselves from their contemporaries back home in Europe. European knights fought for personal gain and honour and carried themselves independently on the battlefield. A Knights Templar, on the other hand, was conditioned to view himself as part of a greater whole and to regard his fellow Knights as brothers.

Improvised actions on the battlefield were strictly forbidden, and a **Knight** could only break ranks in one of two cases: if he needed to fix his saddle or the horse's harness, or if he saw a Christian being attacked by a Muslim. In all other cases, the Knight was expected to remain in position, with harsh punishments if he broke

Rank | Knight

CHAIN MAIL covered the entire body and protected against arrows and swords.

THE WHITE CAPE enabled the Knights to discern friend from foe during battle.



KNIGHTS

usually came from noble families. From the late 11th century, knighthoods were bestowed by dubbing the knight on both shoulders with the flat of a sword blade.

the rules: "The white mantle with the cross which is the sign of knighthood is ignominiously taken away and he is thrown out of the community and eats for a year on the floor without a napkin, and if the dogs trouble him he is not allowed to complain," the pilgrim reported.

This strict discipline led to impressive results on the battlefield. One source reported that a group of Knights on the way to battle in 1191 rode so closely together that no one was able to get between them. This extremely dense formation had a devastating effect when the Knights Templar crashed into enemy ranks. The oncoming wall of horses and lances smashed into the enemy's front line at 20 kilometres per hour – sufficient to overrun the defenders, who were trampled beneath hooves or simply fled in fear. If the Knights weren't able to break through at the first attempt, the supporting troops moved forward to hold the enemy in check

Knights Templars racked up victory after victory

1138

With the help of the Knights, a combined crusader force from the Byzantine Empire defeats a Muslim army in Shaizar in northern Syria. The local ruler submits to the Byzantine emperor after the battle.

1153

Ascalon, one of the strongest Muslim strongholds, falls to the Christians at the southern border of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. A contemporary source says the Knights were the first to break through the city walls.

1177

Saladin, one of the most renowned commanders of his day, attempts to capture Jerusalem. Despite his superior numbers, the Knights Templar crush the enemy and send the sultan on the run.

while the Knights swung around and prepared for a fresh charge.

The psychological effect of these repeated cavalry attacks was enormous. Here, the Arab armies met a disciplined enemy that could destroy both their shape and their morale.

During the Battle of Montgisard, our pilgrim eyewitness observed how the attack took place:

“Spurring all together, as one man, they made a charge, turning neither to the left nor to the right. Recognising the battalion in which Saladin commanded many knights, they manfully approached it, immediately penetrated it, incessantly knocked down, scattered, struck and crushed.”

Once the cavalry had pierced the enemy line, the light cavalry – the sergeants and the mercenaries – poured in and assisted the Knights in man-to-man combat. The duels continued until one of the two armies was either defeated or the last of its soldiers had fled.

While the marshal's piebald banner remained aloft, the Knights were to stay on the battlefield, pursuing and mercilessly killing any enemy who tried to escape. They would then collect the spoils of war: weapons, equipment and supplies. The knights also recovered dead comrades and tended to the wounded in their army during the march back to their fortress.

“In returning from the battle they are the last and they go behind the rest of the crowd, looking after all the rest and protecting them,” the pilgrim said.

Captivity was worse than death

Once home, a period of mourning began where fallen comrades were hailed and venerated. The most crucial aspect was giving them a Christian

burial, which consisted of a mass for their soul followed by seven days of prayer in the chapel in a service known as ‘Vespers for the dead’. In addition, a poor man was fed meat for 40 days – again for the sake of the dead Knight's soul.

Knights who were taken prisoner were in a poor position. If they weren't immediately killed by their Muslim enemies, they would be ransomed. Contemporary sources reported that the Knights Templar refused to pay such demands, but instead sent relatively worthless items such as a knife or belt. The purpose was to signal that Knights would rather die than buy their freedom – captivity had no honour.

As a result, the Knight didn't wear his surcoat while in prison; only when he was released could he – with the order's permission – once again don the white garment with the red cross.

Medieval tank attack

The Knights' tactics have clear similarities to the Nazis' 20th century **blitzkrieg**: a powerful attack that broke through the enemy's weak point then defeated them in the chaos that followed.

The partnership between Knights, horses and support troops must have required many hours of training and preparation. But historians have no idea about how these exercises were performed, because the order's rules and instructions mention nothing about organised training or drills.

European armies made virtually no use of coordinated exercises in the 12th and 13th centuries, so part of the training must have been done in seclusion. Typically, foot soldiers in the pay of kings and princes were called up for 40-60 days during the summer months, allowing the men to return home in time for harvest. This limited period was usually spent marching ➤

“In returning from the battle they are the last and they go behind the rest of the crowd, looking after all the rest and protecting them.”

Eyewitness in the Holy Land

BLITZKRIEG was the tactic favoured by Nazi Germany's generals. A rapid advance using tanks secured victory over France in 1940.

1187

During the Battle of Hattin, the Knights Templar suffer a rare but disastrous defeat.

Around 230 Knights are killed, and Jerusalem is taken by Saladin's Muslim army a few months later.

1189

The port of Acre on the Mediterranean coast is occupied by the crusaders after a two-year siege. Their victory is a serious setback to the Muslims, as Acre carries great strategic importance.

1212

The Templars play a key role as a force of Christian Spaniards and Portuguese defeat a Moorish army at Las Navas de Tolosa in Spain to slow the Muslims' advance through the Iberian Peninsula.

or skirmishing, so the soldiers had virtually no experience of tactics or battle formations.

It was very different with the Knights Templar. Their ranks usually included veterans with years of experience on battlefields across Europe. It was second nature for experienced Knights to fight with lance and sword on foot or horseback.

This may explain why training wasn't as essential. Despite the lack of evidence, however,

historians believe that the Knights must have practiced at a squadron level to some extent. Training would have fit into the Knights' busy and strictly regulated everyday life between prayer, worship, care of horses and the maintenance of their weapons and armour.

In their spare time, the warriors may have kept in shape by taking part in various wargames – for example jousting tournaments or target practice



Saladin received the Knights' surrender from the King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan.

with a crossbow. Any games were, however, tightly regulated. For example, clause 315 of the *Latin Rule* made it clear that Knights must not throw their lances when jousting, but simply tilt them to avoid the potential for serious injury.

Nor did the Knights hunt, which was otherwise considered good exercise for warriors in medieval society. **Hunting** was considered extravagant and gratuitous – “it is not fitting for a man of religion

to succumb to pleasures”, the code made clear. Instead of hunting, the Knights were expected to focus on spiritually as preparation for war service.

Death paved the way to heaven

When the Knights entered the order, all pledged allegiance to God and the Virgin Mary, and the promise also applied on the battlefield. Faith permeated the warrior’s entire view of their role in warfare. The Knights, like many other Christians of the period, believed the world would soon end and that Christ would return to Earth.

The faithful viewed the crusades and the Christian occupation of the Holy Land as a sign that the ‘end of days’ had come. At the same time, the prophet Mohammed was believed to be the Antichrist, who according to the Bible, had to be vanquished before Christ could return. This meant that the fight against the Muslims was seen as the means for the Templars to pave the way to Heaven and eternal life for all true Christians.

The order’s leaders stoked the fires of belief by making it clear to the Knights that the fate of Christianity depended on their efforts in the Holy Land’s outposts. If a Knight failed in his role as defender of the faith, all of Christianity – and thus their immortal souls – were in peril.

Faith was also kept alive through writings and stories. The Knights weren’t well educated, and most were disinterested in the complicated theological debates of the era. They were, however, transfixed by many of the more popular and instructive Biblical stories. Reading Holy Scripture was a regular practice during evening meals, and dramatic passages and accounts of battles that permeated throughout the Old Testament proved particularly popular. They told how, among other things, the Israelites defended the Holy Land, which had been taken with God’s help. The parallels with the Christian crusaders were undeniable. Also in high demand were poems describing the fight against the Antichrist and the eternal reward awaiting the warrior monks in heaven.

Pope paid tribute to warrior monks

In addition to written sources, there were poems and stories, probably passed on by word of mouth along with accounts of the order’s past achievements. Many tales told of Knights who fearlessly died in the belief that they would immediately enter Heaven. And the Church did what it could to promote the idea:

“Just as true Israelites and warriors most skilled in holy war, are indeed fired up by the flame of charity and fulfil by your deeds the words ➤

HUNTING

served several purposes in the Middle Ages, including as a kind of training for future battles. It was also used for social meetups.

After the Battle of Hattin, the Knights placed their weapons at the foot of Muslim commander Saladin. Shortly after, all were beheaded.



Grand masters of the Knights Templar

Founded the Order of the Knights in Jerusalem in 1119.



Hugues de Payens
1119-1136



Robert de Craon
1136-1147



Everard des Barres
1147-1151



Bernard de Tremelay
1151-1153



André de Montbard
1153-1156



Bertrand de Blanchefort
1156-1169



Philip de Nablus
1169-1171

Led the Knights to their magnificent victory at Montgisard.



Odo de St. Amand
1171-1180



Arnold de Torroja
1181-1184



Gérard de Ridefort
1184-1189



Robert de Sablé
1191-1193



Gilbert Erail
1193-1200



Phillipe de Plessis
1201-1209



Guillaume de Chartres
1210-1218



Pedro de Montañú
1218-1232

Led the Knights during the fatal defeat at the Battle of Hattin.



Armand de Périgord
1232-1244



Richard de Bures
1245-1247



Guillaume de Sonnac
1247-1250



Renaud de Vichiers
1250-1256



Thomas Béraud
1256-1273

Died in Acre when the Order was forced to leave the Holy Land for the last time.



Guillaume de Beaujeu
1273-1291



Thibaud Gaudin
1291-1292



Jacques de Molay
1292-1314

French Knight Hugues de Payens became the first grand master of the Knights Templar.

Was burned at the stake in Paris as the last grand master.

of the Gospel that says: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his [friends'] souls', Pope Innocent II's papal bull stated in 1139, which granted special privileges and status to the Knighthood. Several other popes would repeat the message.

Revealing stories – like the papal words – emphasised the Knights' willingness to sacrifice themselves for others. An example from the early 13th century comes from Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre, who told of a Knight joyfully predicting his own death:

"You should always be prepared to shed your blood for Christ, that is to say, to lay down your lives for God with desire and the sword, following the example of a certain knight of Christ who when he saw the great number of Saracens, began to speak out of his great faith and the joy of

his heart, and to say to his horse: 'Oh Blackie, good comrade, I have done many good day's work by mounting and riding on you; but this day's work will surpass all the others, for today you will carry me to eternal life.'

After this, he killed many Saracens, and at last fell himself, crowned in battle with fortunate martyrdom."

Arrogance proved fatal

The tales of self-sacrifice, every day comradery between the Knight brothers and the powerful religious symbolism such as the red cross on their surcoat all helped make the Knights Templar an efficient war machine.

But religious fanaticism also had its downside. Over time, the warrior monks became overconfident in their beliefs and abilities, and their arrogance and combativeness became a hindrance.

This had fatal consequences when the Knights in 1187 – ten years after their victory at Montgisard – again clashed with Saladin. On 2nd July, the Muslim commander occupied the fortress at the city of Tiberias. The king of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan, who was not a Knights Templar, sat with his army around 30 kilometres away at Sephory (now Sepphoris). He was in no hurry to attack, for Saladin's army was large and the terrain favoured the Muslims. Sephory offered a strong defensive position with access to clean drinking water and other essentials. Guy was advised to bide his time, a decision supported by his own aides who knew the area.

The Knights disagreed, however, and the order's grand master, **Gerard de Ridefort**, successfully persuaded the king to attack. The decision would prove to be fatal.

The crusader army started out for Tiberias on 3rd July without supplies – around a day's march away. The journey was a draining one over dry, barren desert under the burning hot sun. At the same time, Saladin's archers shadowed the crusader army, forcing it to be constantly on the alert for a hail of arrows.

After a few hours, both men and horses were desperate for water. The army did halt by the nearest springs, but by mid-afternoon they'd run out of water. The crusaders could not reverse course, because Saladin had cut off their retreat. King Guy decided to abandon marching straight to Tiberias, but instead directed his troops towards the springs near Kafr Hattin just ten kilometres away. Here the plan was to camp for the night and march on Tiberias the next day. But it wasn't to be.

Thirsty warriors succumbed

Saladin had rumbled the crusaders' plan and constantly harassed the army's rear, sapping it further. Instead of continuing to the fresh springs, the crusaders were forced to camp on an arid plateau. Their situation became even more desperate when during the night Saladin's troops set fire to the dry grass surrounding the crusader camp while praying, singing and beating drums.

When morning came, the exhausted crusaders were parched, their throats dry and eyes blinded from the smoke. Facing them was a Muslim army whose own soldiers had plentiful supplies ➤

“Religious fanaticism also had its downside. Over time, the warrior monks became overconfident in their own beliefs and abilities.”

GERARD DE RIDEFORT

was released the following year. He was beheaded in 1189 after being captured by Saladin for a second time.



Rank | Marshal

THE KNIGHTS' GENERAL managed the fortresses and commanded in the field.

HIS SWORD and chain mail were the same type and quality as other Knights.

THE FOUR HORSES at his disposal comprised two for combat and two for transport.



in autumn 1191. During the Fifth Crusade from 1217-21, the Knights also played key roles on several occasions. In 1218-19, a Christian army besieged the Egyptian port of Damietta. Although the crusaders were reinforced by navies from both Frisia and Genoa, they could only muster 35,000 men, around half their opponents. After a prolonged siege, in July 1219 the Muslims broke through the defences where the Knights stood. The crusaders' foot soldiers fled exposing the entire Christian army. The Muslims began to draw up a formation for attack, while their troops loudly mocked their enemy. Help, however, was near according to Oliver de Paderborn, chronicler and schoolmaster at Cologne Cathedral:

"The master of the Temple with the marshal and rest of the brothers who were present made a charge through a narrow exit and manfully turned the unbelievers in flight...

Thus the Lord God saved those who hoped in Him, through the virtue of the Templars."

Four months later, in November 1219, Damietta fell to the crusader army.

Siege engines crushed the enemy

The Knights Templar possessed a considerable collection of weapons that the order was happy to make available to the crusader armies. During the siege of Acre in 1189-91, the Knights built a large stone-throwing siege engine that, with enormous force and massive destruction, bombarded city walls with huge stones. The Knights also used a powerful counterweight trebuchet – an advanced catapult with swinging arm, that had been donated to the Knighthood by Duke Leopold VI of Austria.

But despite occasional victories, the Christians found themselves slowly pushed out of the Holy Land. Eventually, the Knights' fortresses were the only safe havens. And by 1291 it was over.

The Knights lost their final possession on the mainland, their coastal fortress at Acre, following a siege by the Muslims. After the defeat, the Knights were forced to fall back to Cyprus. From there, the order attempted one last time to regain a foothold in the Holy Land through an attack via Syria. But the expedition failed, and with it the dream of a Christian-held state in the Holy Land. The era of Knights Templar warriors was over. ■

of water, transported in goatskin bags by camel from nearby Lake Tiberias.

Nevertheless, the Knights attacked in their usual fashion. This time, however, things went horribly wrong. The other soldiers in the crusader army weren't as fast or fearless as the warrior monks and failed to follow them. The Templars suddenly found themselves alone in the middle of Saladin's force. The defenders were too strong, and the thirsty, exhausted Knights proved easy prey for the Muslim army.

Soon everyone had been taken prisoner or killed. Two days after his victory, Saladin beheaded all surviving Knights except for the grand master, who was thrown in prison. Two months previously, 60 other Knights had fallen at the Battle of Cresson. Historians estimate that half of all Knights in the Holy Land were lost in these two battles.

A few months after the Battle of Hattin (also known as the Battle of the **Horns of Hattin**), on 2nd October 1187, Saladin entered Jerusalem.

But the defeat did not mean the end of the Knights Templar in Palestine. The warrior monks played an important role for another hundred years during the crusades that followed to recapture Jerusalem.

For example, during the Third Crusade, the Knights were able to hold together the crusader army as it threatened to fall apart due to lack of discipline on the road between Acre and Jaffa

HORNS OF HATTIN

refers to two hills west of the Sea of Galilee in present-day Israel. A German pilgrim says Saladin erected a temple on the site after his victory.

✓ WHAT WE DO KNOW

Weapons and armour were carefully chosen

- The Knights Templar hired the **most-skilled bladesmiths** of the time.
- Their horses were heavy and **designed for cavalry attacks** in formation.
- The warrior monks attacked using **carefully planned tactics**.
- The Knights had **squires and foot soldiers** as support.
- The Order repeatedly defeated **superior Muslim armies**.
- The Knights suffered a **decisive defeat** at the Horn of Hattin in 1187.

4

■ mercenaries, sergeants and squires accompanied the Templars' army for each Knight in the Holy Land. Each Knight had three horses.

? WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

How did the Knights train?

1 There are no contemporary sources that reveal how the Knighthood trained. But we know that they were an **extremely capable and cohesive unit** that was far more effective than the normal peasant

armies of the time. This may be due to the fact that the Knights were typically combat-hardened men with experience from other battles. If that were the case, the order may have got by with limited training, but historians can't be sure.

Why did the Knights go against their usual tactics at the Horns of Hattin?

2 Historians still wonder why the King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan, ordered the Knights on a sapping march without supplies during the fatal Battle of Hattin in 1187. Guy could have simply entrenched himself in the kingdom's fortresses or chosen a more-favourable time to attack.

The decision may have been influenced by **internal strife within the crusader kingdom** in the wake of King Baldwin V's death the year before. The Kingdom of Jerusalem was split into two factions with Guy and the Knights Templar on one side and Count Raymond III of Tripoli on the other. During a council of war on 2nd July,

Count Raymond advised Guy to stay where he was because he didn't think the crusaders could survive an open battle against Saladin.

The distrustful king viewed Raymond as a traitor who wanted to see him humiliated on the battlefield. Therefore, Guy may have decided that he wouldn't fall into Raymond's trap – and therefore allowed his army to march against Saladin, even though he had strong misgivings himself. But why the Knights Templar backed him up remains a mystery.

During the Battle of Hattin, the Knights abandoned their usual strategy.





The Templars knelt in prayer seven times a day. Failure to observe this rule could lead to whipping or imprisonment.

THE TEMPLARS' SECRET WORLD

Far from the battlefields of the Holy Land, the Knights Templar of Europe sweated to raise funds for their order's crusades in Jerusalem. **The brothers left behind very few written testimonies of their daily lives, but historians believe that they led an austere existence full of prayer.**

The heavy sound of the chapel's bell tore apart the night's silence. Theuderic had been dreaming, but the bell's toll made him stumble out of bed – or rather off the thin straw mattress that served as his bed. The young man knew that in a few minutes he must be in the chapel, otherwise he would invoke God's – and more especially his commander's – wrath.

Theuderic ran across the courtyard to the chapel, where the house's four other Knights nodded at him by way of greeting. For half an hour the men immersed themselves in prayer, overseen by the house's priest. Afterwards, Theuderic walked around the stable, checking on the Knights' horses, before returning to his small chamber and settling once more on to his mattress. As his eyes closed, thoughts of God and memories of his family swirled together in a new, confused dream.

The year was 1180 and 25-year-old Theuderic had been a Templar for just two years. But while he wore the long white cloak of a Knight with a red cross emblazoned on his chest, he had never drawn a sword in battle and was far from the Holy Land. Theuderic worked on an agricultural estate, known as Bisham House, 50 kilometres west of

London. The young man had become accustomed to the simple and ascetic life of the order. But he had a guilty secret that must protect at all costs.

The Knights slept with the lights on

Although the Knights Templar were known for their gallant protection of Christian pilgrims and their crusades against the Muslims, the order's activities in the **Holy Land** were only a small part of their overall operation. The Templars administered hundreds of houses, farms and even small industrial settlements throughout Western and Southern Europe. Their primary task was to make money to finance the Knighthood's fight against the infidels – the frontline action and fortified castles in the Holy Land were a constant drain on the treasury. The Templars had received many properties from pious nobles and princes, and the hard-working Templars tried to squeeze every penny from them.

To date, we have not really known much about the lives of the Templars beyond the battles they fought. But the discovery of new documents has given us a glimpse into their everyday life in which hard work filled almost all their waking hours and religion took up the rest.

The Knights' lives were framed by the *Latin Rule*. This was a set of principles that governed

Knights promised to obey the grand master, to renounce all personal possessions and to abstain from any form of sex.

THE HOLY LAND was occupied by around 1,300 Templars in 1180. After the crusaders were defeated by Saladin in 1187, that number gradually dwindled.

Templar life. It consisted of 72 rules that described how the brothers should work and pray, along with practical guidance on everything from the design of their shoes (pointed toes were forbidden) to how they should sleep:

“They will at all times sleep dressed in shirt and breeches and shoes and belts, and where they sleep shall be lit until morning,” proclaimed the 21st paragraph of the *Latin Rule*.

Theuderic knew the rules, so when he got back to his chamber after the night’s prayer session – known as Matins – he didn’t undress. Like many of his comrades, Theuderic wore a woollen cord over his undershirt. The cord helped to keep their underwear in place so that their bodies were covered both day and night. It also reminded the Knights of their vows of celibacy, acting almost as a symbolic chastity belt.

The *Latin Rule* was originally written for Knights in the Holy Land, which was why it had specific rules about how a Templar should sleep: it was more difficult for an enemy to catch a fully dressed Knight off guard in a bright room than in the dark. The fact that Muslim assassins didn’t generally trouble the people of 12th century Berkshire, didn’t mean Theuderic could ignore the rule, which was adhered to zealously throughout Europe. There again, sleeping fully clothed with the lights on may have helped the men keep their vow of celibacy more than a woollen cord.

Chapels were opulent

Chastity was a fundamental principle for all Templars. Even before his initiation, Theuderic,

like all other aspirants, had made three promises to God and the Blessed Virgin: to obey the grand master, to renounce all personal possessions and to abstain from any form of sex.

In order to help Knights keep the third of these vows, contact with women was kept to a minimum.

The *Latin Rule* claimed that it was dangerous for any brother “to look too much upon the face of woman. For this reason, none of you may presume to kiss a woman, be it a widow, young girl, mother, sister, aunt or any other”.

The Templars were not even permitted to accept water from a woman to wash their hands. Sick knights could hire a woman to tend them – caring for the elderly and infirm was not considered suitable work for men.

While women were almost absent from Templar life, God was front and centre. Theuderic and the other knights were subject to a strict religious regime. The nightly mass was the first of seven daily prayer services and attendance was mandatory at every one. Exceptions were made for Knights travelling in the service of the order, but they would be expected to say The Lord’s Prayer instead: 13 times in place of Matins; nine times as a substitute for Vespers, the evening service; and seven times for all the other daily prayer meetings.

The masses took place in chapels where the brothers stood, knelt and sat on the cold stone floor. But while the services may have been uncomfortable, the men could at least rejoice in the lavish decoration – the Templars had some of the finest religious buildings and artefacts of the Middle Ages. Even Theuderic’s chapel in Bisham

had a gold-plated silver cross, an organ, a silvered image of the Virgin Mary with a precious gemstone, two silver-plated chalices, two large bells, two tunics embroidered with silk, three books of antiphons, several precious religious works, several rich hand-coloured tapestries, an incense boat and more besides, including **splinters** that the priest said were from Christ’s cross.

Such costly ecclesiastical opulence had consumed funds, of course, but the brothers were proud ➤

“A woollen cord reminded the Knights of their vows of celibacy, almost like a symbolic chastity belt.”

SPLINTERS

from the cross of Jesus were one of the most popular medieval relics. Modern radiocarbon analysis shows that almost none came from Christ’s time.

Food | Bread



BREAD, made from wheat and rye flour, was a part of all Templar meals.

WHOLE LOAVES were saved for later. Left-over broken loaves were given to the poor.

Continues on page 60

Farms became money spinners for the crusades

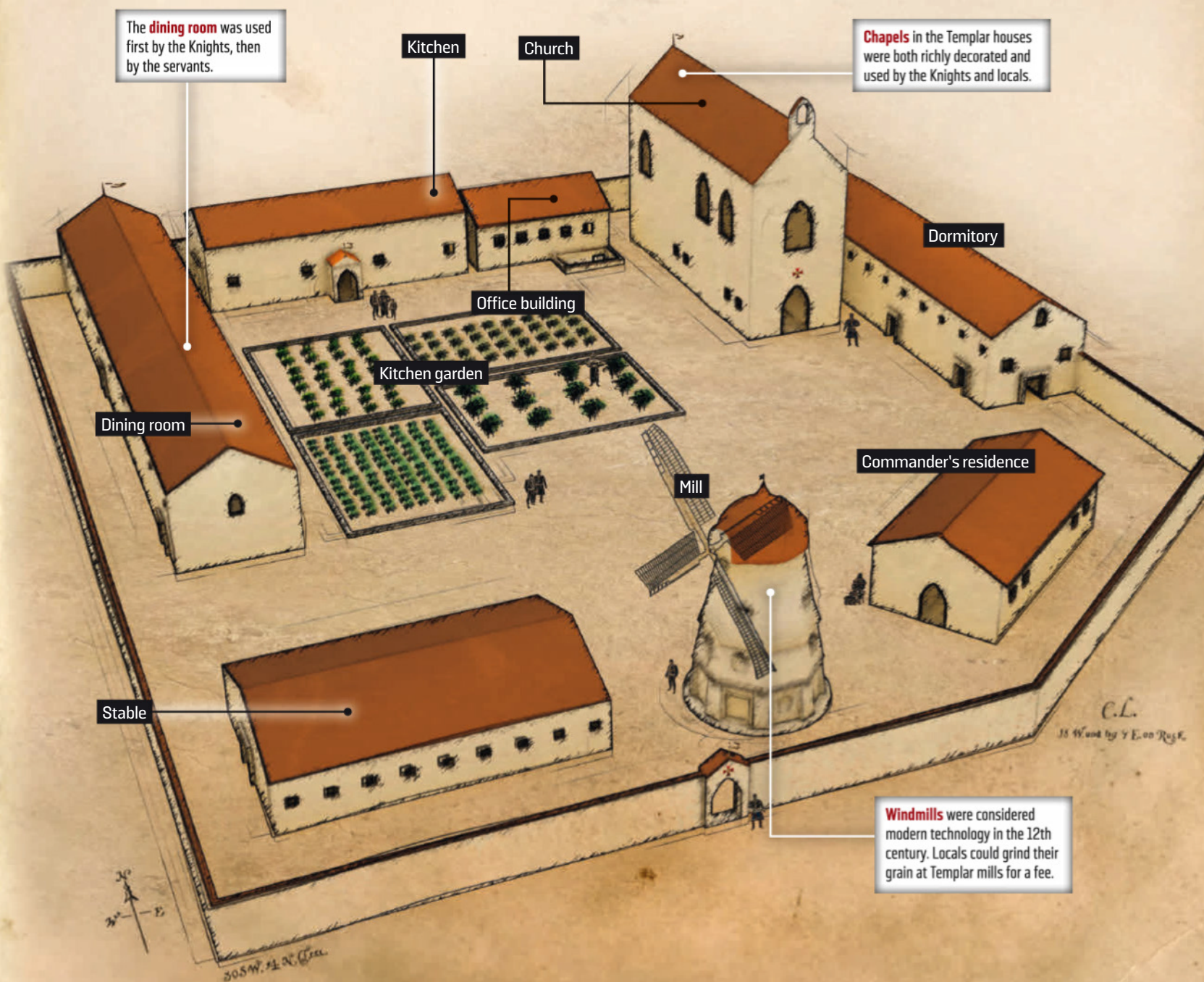
Most Templar houses were small, but the few Knights stationed at each one contributed to a thriving economy that helped raise money for the war in the Holy Land.

Most Templar houses in Western Europe were inhabited by just three to five Knights who worked as farmers, craftsmen and bankers. The houses operated as small, community-run

production centres; the brothers spent their days passing between their dorm, dining room, chapel and workplaces.

Unlike monasteries, Templar houses were not closed off, but were part of the

local community. Farmers and common folk came to grind grain at the mill, buy the brothers' wares, settle money matters and, of course, pray in the order's beautiful chapels.





INTERVIEW

Helen Nicholson is a professor of medieval history.

Helen Nicholson works at Cardiff University and has written numerous books on the Templars, including her excellent recent work, *The Everyday Life of the Templars*.

Knights gave up almost everything for God

When a young man entered the Templar order, he packed away his old life. The Knights didn't tolerate sex, drinking or contact with family. That's what the rules said, but in practice the regulations were often bent. That's the claim of Helen Nicholson, professor of medieval history at Cardiff University.

? Almost all aspects of the Templars' lives were prescribed and restricted. Which parts of the regime were most difficult to follow?

Some Knights probably had difficulty living up to their vow to give up personal belongings and the ban on boasting. Many of the men had been successful fighting knights before entering the order. For them, the transition to a monkish existence must have been a major transformation.

? Why did so many choose to enter the order, even when they knew it was a hard way of life?

The most important motive was probably the desire to serve God and the Virgin Mary. In the Middle Ages, being a good Christian ranked above everything else, and working for God was the highest honour a man could hope for. Some Knights had less lofty reasons. Documents from the period show that some entered the order because it offered a better standard of living. Many were seduced by the opportunity to

win honour and glory on the battlefield, while others wanted to see the world, especially the Holy Land.

? Why did the Templars have such strict rules – for example, forbidding all contact with women?

According to medieval Catholic Christianity, sexual contact – or even sexual attraction – destroyed spiritual pursuits that were considered so important. The Templars often recruited secular knights from among the nobility, and these men were accustomed to taking advantage of women – either by seducing them with boasts about their military prowess or by simply taking them captive. It was difficult to keep such Knights away from the opposite sex, which is why the rules were so strict.

? Were the rules about gender segregation always followed?

Apparently not. Admittedly, the order officially obeyed the *Latin Rule*, which

was approved at the Council of Troyes in 1129 and forbade contact between men and women. Yet women definitely worked in Templar houses. For example, a man called John de Crepping paid 12 women to milk the ewes at Faxfleet, the largest Templar house in Yorkshire.

It is unclear to what extent the knights in religious orders kept their vows of chastity.

It seems inevitable that there was some contact between the female farm workers and the Knights. There is even some indication that the order occasionally accepted women as sisters. For example, documents show that a woman named Ermengarda

d'Oluja entered the order as an associate with her husband, Gombau, in the late 10th century. When he died, she was initiated as a Knight herself and in 1198 became the preceptrix – or the female commander – at the Templar house in Rourell, Spain.

? Was it common for Templars to be married?

Some Knights must have been married, because the rules stipulated what

happened to a brother's property if he died before his wife: part went to the order and part paid for his wife's maintenance. The rules also allowed married men to join the order as Knights for a limited time.

? Were married knights forced to cut off contact with their wives?

In theory – and according to the rules – yes. In practice, we don't have any surviving testimonies to know either way. In fact, it is unclear to what extent the priests and knights in religious orders kept their vows of chastity.

? Did the Templars break any other types of rules?

Violations have certainly occurred, but military orders, such as the Knights Templar, tried to keep scandals behind closed doors. The knowledge we have of Knights who broke the rules tends to come from other sources.

For example, a 12th century chronicle by a well-placed clerk, Roger of Howden, talked about the Templar Gilbert of Ogerstan, who was caught stealing money from the Saladin Tithe in 1188. Gilbert had been ordered to collect this special tax, which had been levied to raise money for a new crusade following the sultan's capture of Jerusalem in 1187. Unfortunately for Gilbert, he was caught pocketing some of the money he had collected and was immediately imprisoned by the order.

No one who had taken vows as a Knight could leave the order without permission.



The commanders of the Templar houses enforced the order's rules – mostly.

? Was prison the most frequent form of punishment?

Prison was often used. But corporal punishment was even more widespread – beatings and floggings were common for example. During the trial of English and Irish Knights, many witnesses spoke of servants at Templar houses being flogged if they were caught stealing. The same punishment was also used against Knights who violated the rules.

? Were the rules followed to the letter by all commanders?

I suspect the rules were enforced only to the extent practicable and necessary to maintain general discipline. Commanders and other Templar

authorities no doubt turned a blind eye to some infractions.

? Which rules do you think commanders might have bent?

When young knights entered the order, the rules dictated that they were no longer supposed to have contact with their families. But I would be very surprised if the young men's families let their sons disappear from their lives completely. Many of the new initiates remained in the local area and, unlike monasteries, Templar houses weren't sealed, so it seems likely that some contact was maintained. And that was probably acceptable to most commanders.

? Was it possible for young knights – or others – to leave the order again if, for example, they found the rules impossible to follow?

Formally, no one who had taken vows as a Knight Templar could leave the order again without permission from the proper body – and that would usually be the pope. The only other option was to ask permission to enter an even stricter order, such as the Carthusians, whose members were isolated and banned from speaking. But that resort, of course, would not have been attractive to disaffected brothers. We also have several examples of Knights who deserted the order.

The Templars made great efforts to track down any Knights who absconded. And if the deserters were caught, they would face harsh penalties, including a long spell in prison.

of their churches. Jacques de Molay, the order's last grand master, claimed that he knew of no other order that had better and more beautiful decoration and relics than the Knights Templar.

Old Testament battles for dinner

Although the Templar chapels were officially for use by the house's residents, in practice they were often used by locals – anyone could enter a Knights' chapel at any time. The order's collection of relics was an especially popular draw. The Templars had lots of religious artefacts, and almost all the chapels had sacred objects or fragments of martyrs. For example, Theuderic's house in Bisham held bone fragments from Saint **Cosmas and Damian**, Arabic brothers who were martyred around AD 300 in the Roman province of Syria.

Faith and worship were not limited to scheduled services. Everyone was expected to say grace on a regular basis throughout the day. Supper was also served with generous helpings of Christianity. The Knights ate their meals in silence while a priest or brother read aloud from the Bible. A particular favourite of the order was the Old Testament's Book of Judgement. Full of accounts of bloody battles, it was considered particularly suitable for the warrior monks. Fortunately for Theuderic, the tales had recently been translated into Anglo-Norman French, which was widely spoken in Britain at that time. Like most Knights in England, the 25-year-old did not understand Latin.

While Theuderic listened avidly to the accounts of Old Testament massacres, he shared his plate with another brother. The Knights always ate in pairs, dividing their food and ensuring that each

had enough – it was part of their vow of poverty and reminded Knights that their order had been founded without material wealth. The menu mostly consisted of vegetables; the Knights were allowed meat only three times a week: on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Friday was a fasting day, and on other days the Knights had to settle for vegetables such as cabbage, beets, carrots and parsnips as well as bread. A tenth of the bread, however, was reserved as alms for the poor. Water was always on the table, but the Knights frequently drank wine, too.

Slaves were classed like livestock

Before and after meals, there was work to be done. The house in Bisham had workshops that produced clothing and household goods. The Knights there also operated a windmill.

Theuderic was born on an estate and oversaw the work in the fields. In addition to working hard himself, he also managed three employees and

two slaves who, from early spring to late autumn, wore themselves out with picks and spades. Almost all Templar houses had paid manpower, and the order was generally considered to be a good employer. In addition to a reasonable salary, the field workers received payment in

grain along with warm mittens in the autumn. It was different for the slaves who were listed on the inventory alongside the livestock. Slaves were usually Muslim prisoners of war, but the Templars also occasionally bought slaves at local markets. The slaves did the unpleasant tasks, such as digging over the manure piles, but their labour was valuable to the houses who tried to avoid losing

“Slaves were usually Muslim prisoners of war who did the unpleasant tasks, such as digging over manure piles.”

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

were, according to traditional doctrine, Arab doctors who died for their Christian faith. The brothers were popular saints who are still celebrated by Catholics today.

Four rules brought the Knights close to the Lord



PIETY

Prayer and masses were a regular part of the Knights' daily life. The order's strict interpretation of Christian doctrine meant that games and theatre were off limits. Falconry wasn't allowed either, but if you could find a lion, you could hunt that.



SILENCE

The Knights weren't permitted to speak after dark. The silence lasted until the next morning. Even when allowed to speak, the brothers were cautioned that "idle words and wicked bursts of laughter" were prohibited. Too much talking was a sin.



COURAGE

Fighting to the death was a matter of honour for Knights on crusade. Withdrawal from the battlefield was only permitted if the Knights' opponents outnumbered them by more than three to one. Even then, death was usually preferable.



CELIBACY

Any type of intercourse with women was forbidden. Knights weren't even allowed to kiss their own mother or sister. The company of women was deemed to be a "dangerous thing". Knights who violated the rules were abased and then expelled.

them through overwork. The rules specified that Knights should not shackle slaves by their necks, put them in a pillory or pierce them with swords – at least not without permission. However, the brothers could whip slaves who deserved it!

Like most Knights in England, Theuderic grew wheat, which was the most profitable crop at the time. Around 40 per cent of the Templars' possessions in England were wheat fields, and documents from the 10th and 11th centuries show that it consistently commanded the best prices. Often the crops were sold in advance to Italian merchants, so the order had money for investment. But growing wheat required a lot of work and fertiliser. Theuderic therefore spent a lot of his time sending people to collect and then spread horse and pig manure across the fields.

Knights helped people dodge tax

But wheat farming wasn't the Templars' only money-making enterprise. The house in Bisham, like many other Templar manors, lent gold to local bigwigs, as well as craftsmen, farmers and anyone else who was temporarily short of funds. All were welcome to draw money from the Knights' accounts.

The Templar loans were secured



Food | Wine

WINE was often served at mealtimes. The Knights liked it served hot.

BARRELS used to store wine were usually made locally.

with land or goods, including clothing. And if the borrower could not pay back the debt, the order simply gained more possessions and land.

The Templars' loans weren't free. They couldn't charge interest because that was

Continues on page 64



The Templar coffers filled up when the Knights began to charge 'rent' on loans.

DAY WAS FILLED WITH PRAYER AND WORK

The Knights had to think about God's will constantly, so their hands were steeped in prayer around the clock – even in the middle of the night. When they finished praying, there was work to be done.



02.00

Matins. After prayers, the Knights check their animals before returning to sleep.



Dawn

The house is roused by the roosters. In winter, the brothers have to rise before dawn.



06.00

Prime is the morning service, the second of seven daily prayer meetings.

15.00

Afternoon prayer service. After the prayers, a mass is said for the dead.



Afternoon

Work in the field and workshops continues. Some Knights receive visitors who want to see the chapel's relics. The order's religious artefacts are popular, and the chapels are often open.



12.30

First meal. Knights eat initially followed by orderlies and other servants. After the meal, everyone says a short prayer of thanks.



Late afternoon

People who want to take out loans, pay back debts or lodge items with the Templars are received. Meanwhile, work around the house continues.



18.00

Evening prayers – Vespers – is often longer than the day's other services.





Morning

The house's Knights and servants service their equipment and tools and prepare those required for the day's many tasks.



09.00

Terce. This prayer implores the Holy Spirit to give the workers the strength to handle their allotted tasks.



12.00

The noon prayer – known as Sext because it is the sixth hour after Prime. After the prayer, the brothers attend a mass in the chapel.

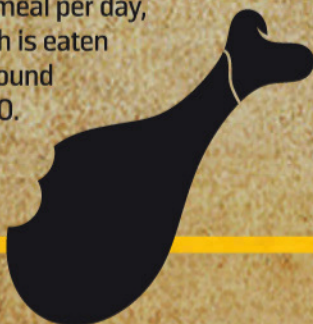


Before lunch

The Knights monitor the work in the fields and workshops. Often the brothers also labour.

18.30

Second meal. On fasting days and during Lent, however, there is only one meal per day, which is eaten at around 16.00.



19.00

The Knights have a drink. Silence is then expected to be maintained until dawn.



Evening

The Knights check on the animals and attend the final prayer service of the day: Compline. The brothers then retire to bed.



BULLS

were papal decrees, usually named after the first words – for instance, 'Omne datum optimum' means 'Every perfect gift'.

considered a sin by the Catholic Church, but the enterprising brothers found a way around that. Instead of asking for interest on the loan, the order charged rent on the amount borrowed. This piece of semantic trickery satisfied the pope and allowed gold to pour in.

Merchants and others could also lodge valuables with the Templars for a fee – and not just gold or treasure. The most efficient private banking system of the time also safeguarded important documents, livestock and even prisoners.

In 1139, the pope issued the **bull** *Omne datum optimum* which conferred special privileges on the Knights Templar and made them answerable to the pope alone. The decree also exempted the Knights and any tenants on their property from paying both ecclesiastical and ordinary taxes. It didn't take the canny Knights long before they figured out how to exploit their new status to earn even more money. Since their tenants didn't have to pay taxes, the Knights could charge them a higher rent. The Templars even placed their famous red cross on properties of people who weren't their tenants, so that the inhabitants wouldn't have to pay tax. Presumably the

“The time after the meal was reserved for quiet pursuits and religious contemplation. Games were banned.

This document lists the many debts owed to the Templars by Berkshire's citizens.

householders made regular 'charitable donations' to the Templars to show their gratitude.

Of course, such sharp practices were noted by contemporary observers. In the mid-13th century a satirical work called *Sur les États du Monde* highlighted the order's capitalist outlook:

"The Templars are most doughty men, | And they certainly know how to provide for themselves, | But they love their pennies too much. | When prices are high | They sell their wheat | Instead of giving it to their households."

Pleasures were banned

The order's booming economy didn't benefit Theuderic. All revenues went into Templar coffers; the Knights themselves lived in poverty.

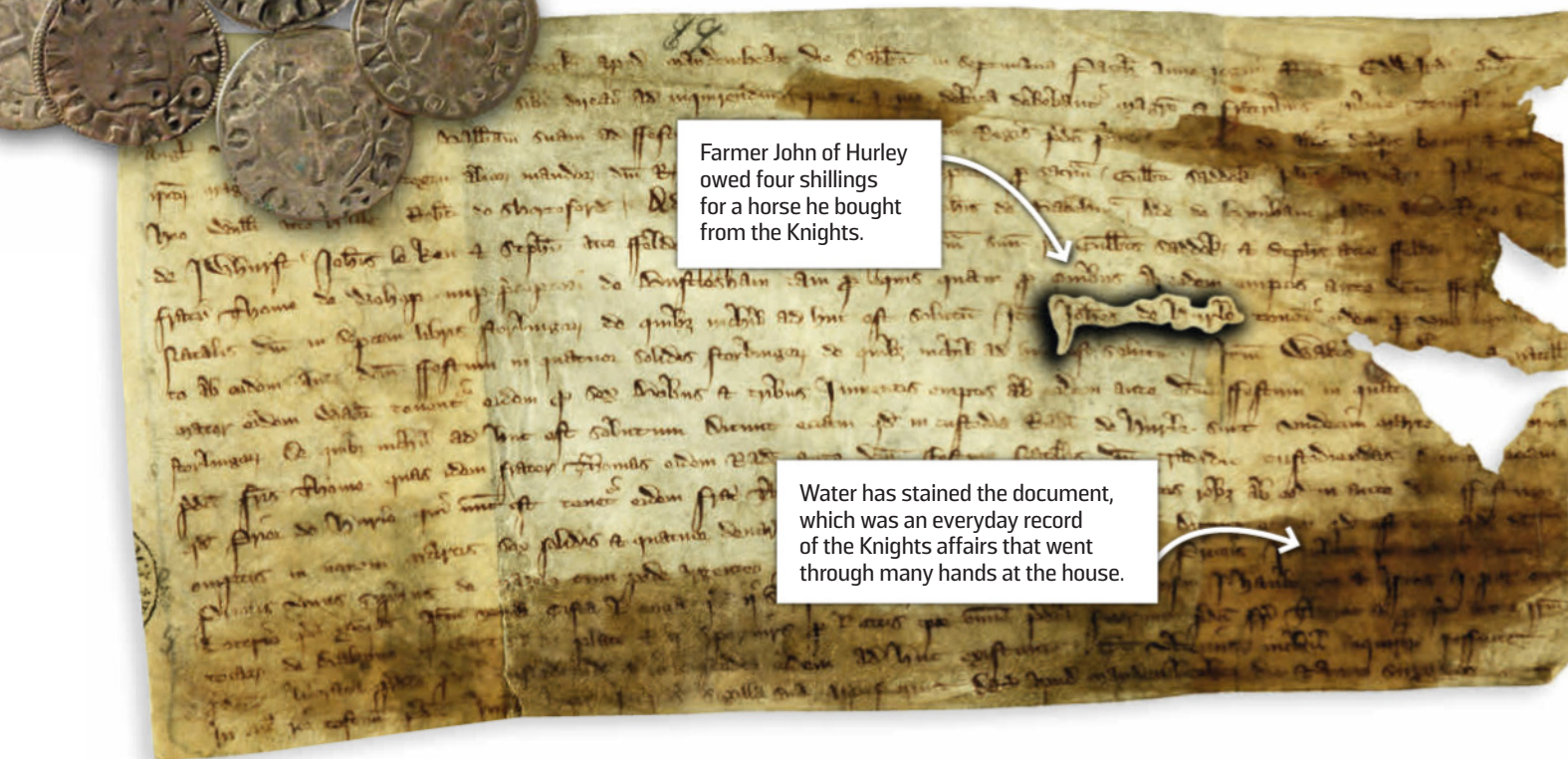
When Theuderic was initiated as a brother, the young man had to give up all the material goods that the Middle Ages could offer – and most of its pleasures, too.

Theuderic's sole possessions were his weapons, a blanket, a hard pillow and the clothes he stood in. And when he was given a new set of garments, he had to neatly fold up his old set and hand it over. The white robe was not to be adorned in any way, and fur coats were strictly forbidden. If Theuderic had dared to ask for a better robe, the rules meant that he would have received the worst the house had to offer.

Privacy was also an unknown luxury. Within the order nothing was allowed to be kept hidden,

Farmer John of Hurley owed four shillings for a horse he bought from the Knights.

Water has stained the document, which was an everyday record of the Knights affairs that went through many hands at the house.



and Theuderic was not allowed to write letters to his family without permission from the commander of his house. And if he himself received a letter, it had to be read aloud at dinner so everyone could hear. The time after the meal was reserved for religious contemplation. Games were banned. And unlike many in the Middle Ages, the Knights never listened to storytellers or watched shows put on by traveling actors. There was no hunting either. Falconry, a fashionable sport of the period, was especially frowned upon. Essentially, the Knights shunned all forms of pleasure. As the *Latin Rule* put it:

“It is not fitting for a man of religion to succumb to pleasures, but to hear willingly the commandments of God, to be often at prayer and each day to confess tearfully to God in his prayers the sins he has committed.”

However, one form of hunting was allowed: lions could be killed at will. Historians believe that this exception wasn't intended to encourage big game hunting, however – it was more of a metaphorical exhortation to fight the Devil.

“The lion... comes encircling and searching for what he can devour, his hands against every man and every man's hand against him.”

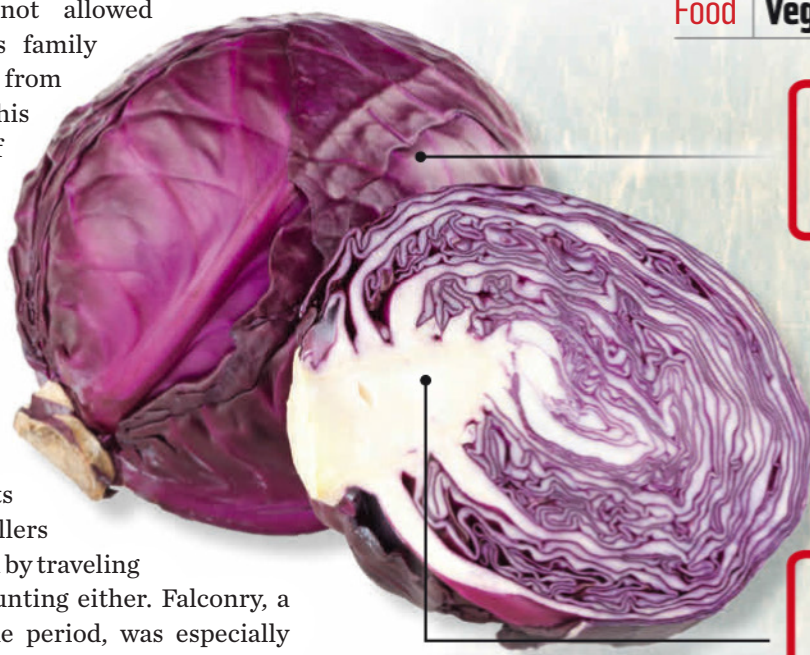
In any case, as lions were few and far between in Western Europe at the time, whether the Knights were meant to take the suggestion literally didn't come up. And presumably no-one questioned why lions had hands, either.

Sinners had to eat on the floor

Theuderic adhered to most of the rules, but he did have a secret: he loved **chess**. The board and pieces were hidden in the stable, and at times he and another Knight would sneak there for a game.

Theuderic was not alone in his passion. Historians believe that despite the prohibitions, a number of Templars played chess and other games. In several Templar houses, archaeologists have found both chess pieces and dice. And paintings from the 13th century show Templar Knights with their distinctive white cloaks with red crosses deep in thought over a chessboard.

If Theuderic was discovered, his commander would have to decide on the most fitting



Food | Vegetables

VEGETABLES, including red cabbage, made up the most of the Knights' diet.

RED CABBAGE contains important nutrients, including vitamins C and K.

punishment. Perhaps he would be forgiving: Theuderic was young and had not quite settled as a Knight. Or perhaps the commander even enjoyed the odd game of chess himself? There are indications that house leaders often turned a blind eye to such minor infractions. The paintings also suggest that the game was popular in the order.

But if his commander chose to punish Theuderic, the best that the young Knight could hope for was to be put on bread and water four days a week and forced to eat on the floor with the dogs. At worst, he could be whipped and put in chains.

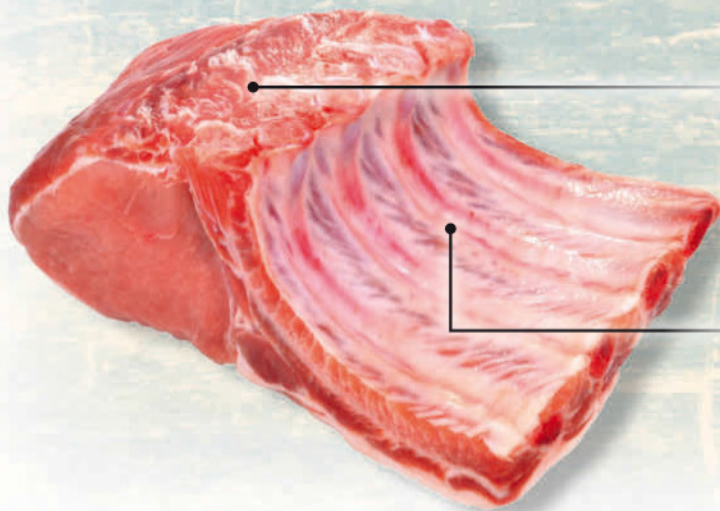
The Templars' disciplinary measures included various forms of corporal punishment, such as floggings and beatings. Imprisonment, abasement and other sanctions were also used. If a knight was caught eating forbidden foods on a fasting day, he could be sentenced to bread and water for one year and one day. The most serious punishment was to be ejected from the order – something that was usually accompanied by a flogging. This punishment was reserved for Knights who had committed the worst sin of all: killing a Christian. This sentence was administered in 1257 when three Knights from Palestine were convicted of killing a group of Christian merchants. The Knights were expelled and publicly whipped.

The first protest songs

For Theuderic, the Holy Land was a distant dream. Although he had entered the order with ambitions of winning glory on the battlefield, ➤

CHESS became widespread in Europe during the Middle Ages after being introduced to Spain by Muslims. The rules were a little different from the modern game.

Food | Meat



MEAT was only on the menu three days a week: Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

BEEF AND MUTTON were eaten regularly. Pork was less readily available.

like the vast majority of Templars, he had to settle for listening to stories from Jerusalem instead. The house in Bisham occasionally received letters with news from the Holy Land. The letters were one of the few written sources that the Templars produced themselves. The written word was not especially prized in the order, and many Knights were illiterate.

Most of the mail consisted of begging letters asking for funds to continue the fight against the Muslims. In the 13th century the Knight Templar and troubadour **Ricaud Bonomel** even started to write songs protesting about the way in which the pope diverted funds intended for the crusades:

“The pope is generous in his distribution of pardons... | while he displays great miserliness toward us here, | for he forgives the taking of the cross... | for they sell God and pardon for money.”

Looking after the sick

While Theuderic had to settle for a humble life to support those fighting in the Holy Land, he was well provided for in other ways. The order offered all the necessities of life and cared for sick and weak brothers. For instance, it even allowed Knights who were unfit to miss certain services, including Matins in the middle of the night. Sick people were also permitted to eat more often – although certain foods, like beef, eel and cheese, were considered unsuitable for anyone who was under the weather.

Like most Templar houses in England, Bisham was too small to have its own infirmary. Long-

itself, the body of a deceased brother was washed and wrapped in clean linen. The funeral took place in the house’s own chapel on consecrated ground. Often, local dignitaries and other lay folk attended the service and interment – funeral parties of a hundred people were not uncommon.

A good place to work and die

Many of those who attended the funerals hoped to be buried the same way when their time came. Being buried in the chapel’s grounds was another perk of working for the Templars: employees had the right to be laid to rest in consecrated land, which wasn’t a given in the Middle Ages.

After the funeral, 100 prayers for the deceased were offered every day for a week. The living also benefited: for 40 days the deceased’s full ration of food and drink would be bestowed on a poor member of the local community. Both secured the departed Knight’s entrance into Heaven. The deceased Templar was also helped along the way by

the 60 recitations of the Lord’s Prayer made every day by the remaining Knights – 30 for the living and 30 for the dead. Likewise, all the brothers attended a mass for the deceased every afternoon.

With all these prayers and rituals, Theuderic no doubt believed he would reach Paradise himself one day. And until it was time to meet God, he was able to enjoy a life that was far safer than most in the Middle Ages. The price was a simple life of prayer, hard work and devotion – with no hunting, no privacy and definitely no sex. ■

RICAUD BONOMEL

also complained about priests who did not campaign for the crusades and Europe’s bickering kings.

“Being buried in the chapel’s consecrated grounds was another perk of working for the Templars.”

✓ WHAT WE DO KNOW

The Knights Templar worked hard

- The order had **possessions and houses** all over Western Europe.
- The houses were an **active part of the local community**.
- The Knights **made money** via agriculture and finance.
- **Prayer and work** were strong features of the Knights' daily lives.
- The **Latin Rule** was the basis of the order's existence.
- Only a **few of the Knights** fought in the Holy Land.

72

■ regulations made up the original *Latin Rule*, the guidelines that governed Templar life, and helped keep the Knights on the right path.

? WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

How many Knights Templar were there?

1 We know the names of some Knights – especially those who won **honour and glory** on the battlefield, and the relatively few who were indicted after the arrests in 1307. But the vast majority of Knights

were never documented. The question of how many brothers occupied the order's properties is a matter of guesswork. Educated estimates put the total number of members at the start of the 14th century between 1,500 and 7,000.

How much money did they have?

2 We know that Templar houses offered local and international financial services because we still have the loan agreements and receipts from some of their transactions. But it's unclear how much the order had in its coffers. A lot of the funds were sent to the Holy Land to pay for the order's crusades and repairs to its fortresses. Historians aren't sure how much was left in Western Europe when the order was dissolved or whether some of the Knights' valuables were hidden.

Did the Knights obey their own rules?

3 Life in the order was subject to the terms in the *Latin Rule*, but there's plenty of evidence to suggest that the Templars didn't always fully abide by their moral code and weren't perhaps always as chaste as the Church would have liked. Other documents indicate that women worked closely with the Knights as helpers and kitchen maids. Some knights were even married while wearing the white robe. All of this leads historians to suspect that the Knights' vows of celibacy were not always strictly kept, but no one knows to what extent they were breached.

The majority of Templars lived more like monks than warriors. Most never travelled or drew a sword in battle.





The Chalice of Doña Urraca, which is kept in a church in north-western Spain, is alleged to be the Holy Grail.

THE HUNT FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

As Christ died on the cross, his disciples – following Jewish tradition – collected his blood in a cup. The Holy Grail is believed to bring wealth and eternal life to whoever holds it. **Its legend has led the Knights Templar, archaeologists and amateurs on the search for Christianity's greatest treasure.**

The wind tugged at John Bowers' long green coat as he moved back and forth across the Glastonbury Tor in Somerset. With his trained eye, Bowers scoured the terrain for tell-tale hollows while his dowsing rods looked for traces of water that might reveal caves beneath Glastonbury's fertile grass.

The days Bowers had spent on the 158-metre-tall hill numbered in the hundreds. The former bus driver was convinced that Glastonbury Tor hid the Holy Grail, and for years he'd searched around Glastonbury along with thousands of other Grail hunters. The mythical hill, which first gained prominence in the legends of King Arthur, has become a magnet for adventurers with one shared obsession: finding Christianity's most fabled object.

According to tradition, the Holy Grail is the cup that Jesus Christ drank from at the Last Supper. The cup was then used to collect his blood while he hung on the cross. Legend says that because it held the blood of the Son of God, the Grail possesses miraculous properties to bring whoever holds it wealth, happiness and long life.

The Grail has been sought for almost 2,000 years, and the most dedicated treasure hunters believe the vessel must be hidden thousands of kilometres

away from its roots in dusty, arid Jerusalem. Instead they've turned hopeful glances towards the fertile and cool climate of southern Britain. It may seem strange that, during a period when long journeys across the sea were rare and arduous, the Grail should end up so far from the site where Christ was crucified, known as Calvary or Golgotha. But for Grail hunters, its location can be divined from ancient legends and texts, not least in form of a less familiar Biblical figure: Joseph of Arimathea.

Secret is revealed in the gospels

According to the New Testament, Joseph was a wealthy man who gained permission from the Romans to take down Christ's crucified body and bury him in his own tomb. Joseph appeared in

all four gospels and may have been Christ's uncle. The story relates how Joseph collected Jesus's blood in a cup after the soldier Longinus stabbed him in the side with his lance. Although the collection of blood wasn't mentioned in contemporary accounts, the story may well be true, for Jewish tradition at the

time instructed that the body should preferably be buried whole – blood included. If Christ had been lanced, as the Bible says, it would have been natural – from a historical perspective – for his disciples to try and save as much blood as

It may seem strange that, when long journeys across the sea were rare and arduous, that the Grail should end far from where Christ was crucified.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

portrayed Joseph of Arimathea as a "respected member of the council, who was himself looking for the kingdom of God", while the Gospel of Matthew described him as a "rich man... who was also a disciple of Jesus".x

The Grail is sought from Cyprus to North America



Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland was founded in 1446. However, symbols in the chapel suggest that surviving Knights were involved in its construction. Rumours persist that the **Grail is beneath the chapel.**

Scotland

Temple Church in Bristol was one of the Knights' most important English possessions and a natural place to hide treasure. Archaeologists **found a magnificent chandelier** under the church, but no Grail.



England

London

Glastonbury Tor is an ancient, sacred area where, according to legend, Joseph of Arimathea hid the Holy Grail after his **flight from Palestine.**

Paris

Gisors houses an ancient Templar castle. Graffiti carved into the walls and other clues suggest Knights were imprisoned here in 1307 and perhaps **left treasure** hidden in the castle.

Oak Island, Canada

Oak Island has been home to an intense treasure hunt around a deep shaft in the ground since 1800. Some adventurers believe the Grail lies at the bottom of the hole because **built-in traps** are reminiscent of Templar architecture.



Valencia Cathedral is home to the **Santo Cáliz** (Holy Chalice), arguably **the best candidate for the actual Grail.** Several scientists have dated the dark red agate cup to around the time of Christ's birth.

Rome

Rome was home to Christian relics after the Roman Empire converted to Christianity in the 4th century. One account stated the Grail was at one point in Rome. It may still lie **beneath its churches or in its catacombs.**

Athens

NORTH AFRICA

Thousands of treasure hunters still hope to find the Grail. Enthusiasts see clues pointing to monasteries, churches and wells across a wide area from Cyprus in the east to Oak Island in the west.

The Knights probably possessed sapphires and rubies that may lie buried with the Grail.

Cyprus is another possible hiding place for the Grail. The island became the Knighthood's base after its expulsion from the Holy Land. Kolossi Castle on the south coast probably houses some treasures, but others may have been carried away during an Ottoman invasion in 1571.



Middle East

Cyprus

MEDITERRANEAN

possible. Immediately after the crucifixion, the cult surrounding Christ gained momentum. The Romans, who'd occupied Palestine, were not keen on new religious movements in the region, so early Christian leaders either fled the country or were imprisoned – as was the case with Joseph of Arimathea according to Biblical stories.

After Joseph escaped, he decided to leave Palestine, where it had become impossible to preach the Christian faith. Grail hunters guessed – with no shred of evidence – that Joseph decided to bring the Grail to safety as far from Palestine as possible. They settled on Glastonbury as his destination, despite the fact the journey 2,000 years ago would have been long and perilous.

Toy with the theory, though, and the choice of Britain as Joseph's refuge isn't completely illogical. The Bible described him as a rich merchant, and in that capacity, he may have travelled widely on business to far-flung places like Britain. Glastonbury lay on the trade routes between Britain and the Empire and had already been a holy place for millennia. For a merchant on the run, this sacred area on the fringes of the Roman Empire might have made a natural hiding place for Christianity's most important relic.

University lecturer Gordon Strachan, who has studied the Grail stories extensively, identified several clues that he believes indicate that Joseph may have travelled to Glastonbury – first and foremost several stone monuments of the same type in both Glastonbury and the Middle East. Additionally, there is a connection between names: Joseph was probably born near a place called Ayalon – strikingly close to 'Avalon', which is a medieval term for the Glastonbury area. But this coincidence of names and the stone monuments are the only firm link that can be made between the Grail, Joseph, Palestine and Britain.

Hawthorn flowers at Christmas

Not only do no contemporary written sources mention the Grail, but archaeologists have been unable to find even the smallest trace of Joseph of Arimathea in Britain. Consequently, Grail hunters must primarily rely on myth and superstition. Legend has it that when Joseph reached Glastonbury, he thrust his staff into the ground, which grew into a hawthorn as a sign he'd come to a place chosen by God. It's true that one species of hawthorn still grows in and around Glastonbury ➤

” At Glastonbury Abbey in the shadow of the Tor, archaeologists conducted at least 36 digs between 1904 and 1979.

today – and nowhere else. Unlike regular hawthorn, the species flowers twice a year: at Christmas time (according to the old Julian calendar) and again at Easter. The plant's unusual behaviour is a bit of a mystery but is probably influenced by the area's mild climate. Several attempts to grow cuttings of the hawthorn elsewhere have failed.

If we accept the idea that Joseph did reach Glastonbury, he probably would have buried the Grail at Glastonbury Tor, a hill that stands apart from its surroundings and which has been associated with religious powers since Celtic times. This is precisely why treasure hunters have been digging in the ground of the Somerset hill for over one hundred years.

WELLESLEY TUDOR POLE

spent his life seeking religious and spiritual answers. He died in 1968.

Grain merchant claimed Grail find

Grail digging peaked around 1900, when treasure hunters expended massive energies in attempting to literally get to the bottom of the matter. A breakthrough appeared to come in 1906 when grain merchant and eccentric **Wellesley Tudor Pole** had

” This was the very vessel which was brought by night nearly nineteen centuries ago.

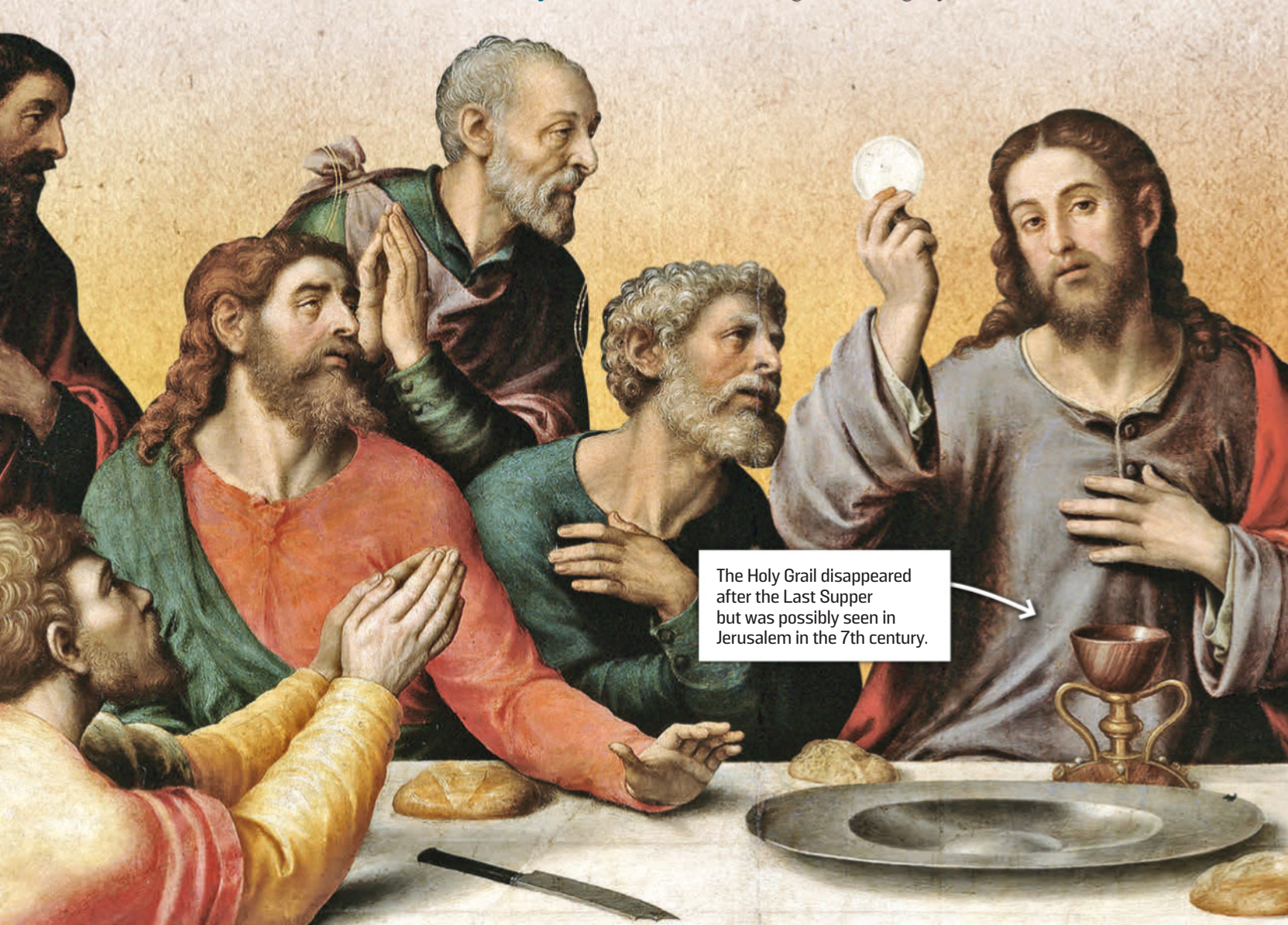
Mark Twain, 1907

a vision that told him the Grail was at the bottom of a well near Glastonbury Tor. Pole and his aides found – in what appeared to be an act of divine providence – an old blue glass decorated with small crosses in the well. The object was examined by archaeologists and clergymen alike, none of whom could deny the possibility that it might be the Grail.

On 20th July 1907, an enthusiastic Pole revealed the glass as the Grail to the world's press, who stared amazed at what purported to be the goblet from Christ's crucifixion. The object was a sensation for months, but interest soon faded. After attending a viewing, Mark Twain wrote:

“I am glad I have lived to see that half-hour... In its way it stands alone in my life's experience. In the belief of two persons present this was the very vessel which was brought by night and secretly delivered to Nicodemus, nearly nineteen centuries ago, after the Creator of the Universe had delivered up his life on the cross for the redemption of the human race.

“The very cup which the stainless Sir Galahad has sought with knightly devotion in far fields of



The Holy Grail has changed form many times



A CUP

The Grail was used during the Last Supper as a drinking vessel when Christ shared wine with his disciples the night before his death. The same cup – or one similar – was allegedly used by Jesus's disciples to collect the Saviour's blood as he hung from the cross.



A DISH

In Grail literature dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, the Holy Grail is repeatedly described as a plate or dish. The Grail is an extremely illustrious object in these stories – often of the purest gold, studded with precious stones and possessing magical properties.



A MAGICAL STONE

During the Middle Ages, it was widely believed that the Holy Grail provided wisdom, insight, and immortality. The Philosophers' Stone had similar properties and could turn base metal into gold. In several stories, the two objects were one and the same.



ROYAL BLOOD

In Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, the Holy Grail isn't an object, but Christ's descendants. Brown took the idea from the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982). However, the book is based on speculation, and its theories are not supported by any historical sources.

peril and adventure in Arthur's time... the same cup which princely knights of other bygone ages had laid down their lives in long and patient efforts to find... and here it was at last, dug up by a grain-broker at no cost of blood or travel, and apparently no purity required of him... not even a stately name required – nothing but a mere Mr Pole."

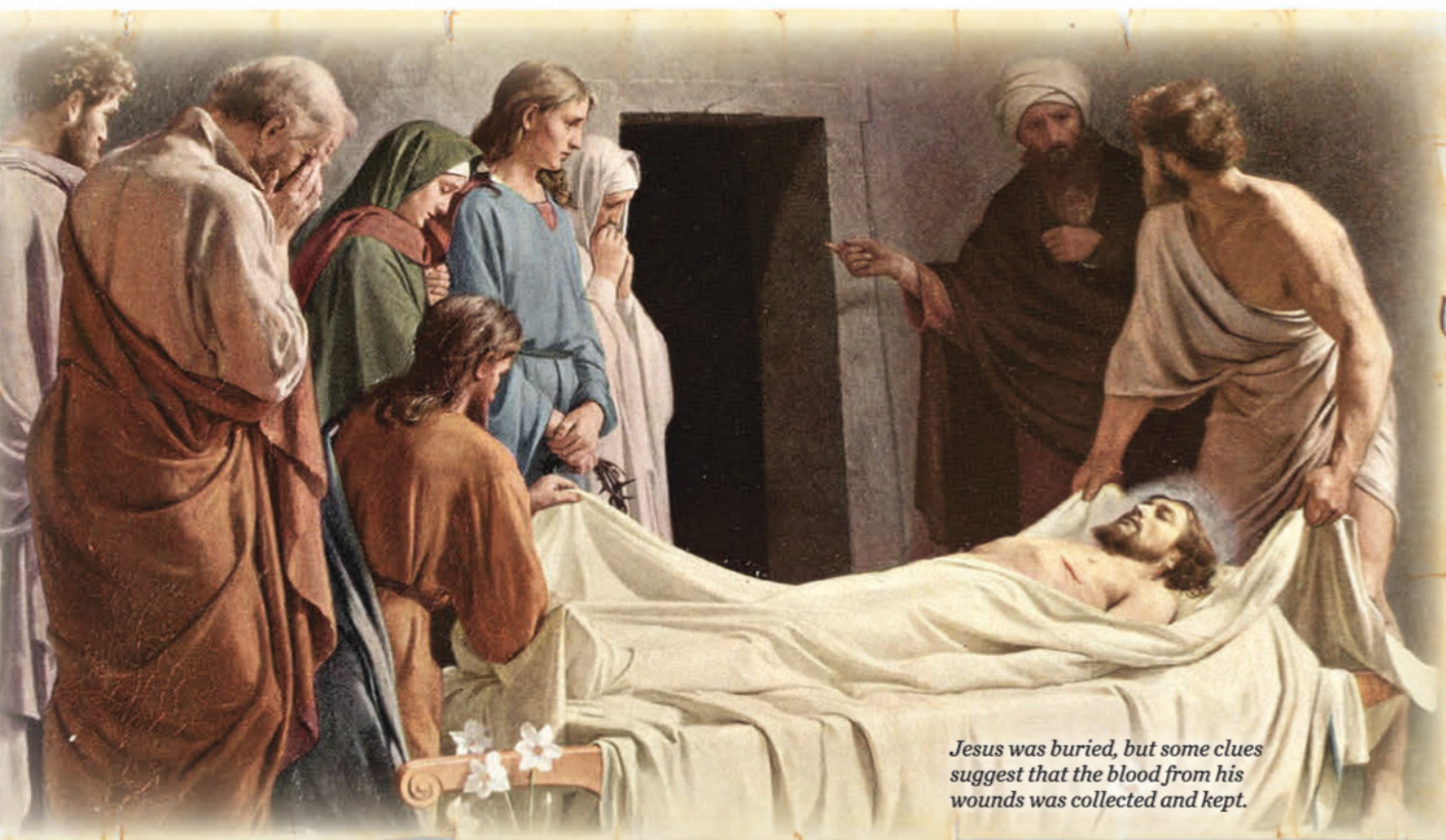
Pole's glass was eventually exposed as a fake in January 1908 when a panel of scientists – including

experts in glass – declared, after thorough examination, that the object was "too well preserved to be ancient". Further investigation revealed that the glass had been purchased in Bordighera, Italy in the 1890s and placed in the well by another eccentric, Doctor John Goodchild.

Several excavations followed during the 20th century, not least at Glastonbury Abbey in the shadow of the Tor, where archaeologists

Was the cup that Christ and his disciples drank from preserved? The mystery remains unresolved.





Jesus was buried, but some clues suggest that the blood from his wounds was collected and kept.

CHALICE WELL lies at the foot of Glastonbury Tor. Archaeologists have uncovered Stone Age flint axes and Iron Age clay pots from near the well.

conducted at least 36 digs between 1904 and 1979. The excavations revealed important details about the monastery's history, but no Grail. Another site near the hill – **Chalice Well** – has been scoured with no result, but the excavations did reveal the well had been used for over 2,000 years. At the same time, the water from Chalice Well has a slightly reddish colour, which according to myth was a reminder of the blood of Christ. Scientific studies have revealed the red colour is due to iron deposits along the spring's underground course.

When it's accepted that the Grail can't be found at Glastonbury, the explanation – beyond the obvious, that it never existed – may be that the sacred relic

disappeared along with the rest of the Knights Templars' treasure. There are clues pointing to the fact the Knights were once in possession of a relic the brothers believed to be the Grail.

Knights had their hands on the Grail

Rumour has it that the Knights constantly searched for the Grail under the Temple Mount during the order's first year in Jerusalem. The mountain is close to where Christ ate the Last Supper and was crucified. If the Holy Grail hadn't been transported to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, then Temple Mount was its most likely resting place. In 1867, Royal Engineer Charles Warren discovered secret

Centuries-long hunt for the Grail

AD 33

Jesus is crucified. The Last Supper, which takes place the night before the crucifixion according to the Bible, will mark the beginning of the Grail legend – the cup from which Christ and his disciples drank.

256

The Holy Grail, along with several other Christian relics, is moved from the Holy Land to Rome. In 256, the Romans command that all relics are surrendered, but the Grail is saved at the last minute.

500

King Arthur sends his knights on a quest for the Holy Grail. The legend recounts that the Grail is stolen from Glastonbury and taken to another king. Sir Galahad and his comrades must recapture the artefact.

tunnels beneath the mountain that had possibly been dug by the Templars. The tunnels were evidence of the order's archaeological efforts, and Warren concluded that the hunt for the Grail and other relics may have been the real reason why the Knights wanted their headquarters on Temple Mount, after which the order was named.

The presence of the Grail in Palestine is, however, only supported by one historical source: the pilgrim Arculf. In the 7th Century, Arculf travelled from Britain to the Middle East, recording his experiences. At the Temple Mount he wrote:

"Between the basilica of Golgotha and the Martyrium, there is a chapel in which is the chalice of the Lord, which he himself blessed with his own hand and gave to the apostles when reclining with them at supper the day before he suffered... The holy Arculf saw it, and through an opening of the perforated lid of the reliquary where it reposes, he touched it with his own hand which he had kissed. All the people of the city flock to it with great veneration."

No other source mentions a Grail in Palestine after the 7th Century, so either Arculf lied or the relic was later hidden away.

Treasures vanished without trace

If the Knights had found the Grail in Jerusalem, it would make sense that the order carried the vessel to Western Europe in the early 12th century. This is the period when the Grail first appeared in literature – from the late 12th century, a literary fashion craze was triggered by French author Chrétien de Troyes. He wrote about a Holy Grail with mystical properties. Many other writers followed his lead, and tales of the Grail became incredibly popular during the medieval period. Many noble families across

Artefacts | Coins



BRONZE, copper and silver were the most widely used metals in coin production.

THE CRUCIFIX and other Templar symbols are on coins dating from the Middle Ages.

Europe owned Grail collections in handsomely bound books on their shelves.

Rumours that the Knights possessed the Holy Grail also circulated widely during the Middle Ages. If the stories were true, then the Grail vanished with the rest of the order's treasures during the arrests of 1307. Historians know that the order possessed enormous valuables, which came from a variety of sources including donations from pious wealthy nobles and princes grateful for the Knights' efforts defending Christianity in the Holy Land. In addition, the order earned income through its extensive financial interests. These came from the acquisition of large tracts of land as well as the Knights managing the assets of nobles and pilgrims who travelled to the Holy Land.

When the Knights were arrested in 1307, King Philip IV ("The Fair") of France – a key

Tales of the Grail became incredibly popular during the medieval period. Many noble families across Europe owned Grail collections on their shelves.

1180

The first narrative about the Grail is written by French poet Chrétien de Troyes. His story describes the Grail as a dazzling object that vanishes under mysterious circumstances.

1437

The Santo Cáliz (Holy Chalice), comes to Valencia, where it remains to this day. The chalice probably dates from the time of Christ and is the most likely candidate for the actual Grail.

1982

The book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* is published. It posits the theory that the Holy Grail is not a physical object but the descendants of Christ. The idea is followed up in *The Da Vinci Code*.

player in the conspiracy that helped destroy the order – probably hoped to find bulging treasure chests when he seized the order’s many houses and castles across Western Europe. But all he found were Knights. Their valuables had all vanished.

Cup dates from the time of Christ

If the Knights had really possessed the Grail it would have surely been whisked away. The order could not have afforded to lose Christianity’s most important relic. Where it disappeared to is anyone’s guess. Perhaps it still exists, for many churches and monasteries claim to possess the one true Grail. More than 200 different vessels – cups, goblets and jugs – lay claim to being the real Grail, but few churches have been happy to allow scientists to investigate their relics.

One exception is the Cathedral of Valencia, where the *Santo Cáliz* (Holy Chalice) relic stands in a dedicated chapel. The Holy Chalice is a simple cup made from dark red agate, a semi-precious stone. The cup itself, around 17 cm high and 9 cm wide, is cut from a single piece of agate. The base is adorned with jewels and inscribed with **Arabic characters**, the meaning of which is hotly debated among scholars.

The chalice’s base was certainly made during the Middle Ages, but the cup itself is believed to be much older. Agate is difficult to date, but based on the construction technique, historians believe it’s around 2,000 years old. More precisely, Spanish academic Antonio Beltrán dated the dish to between 100 and 50 BC, and its craftsmanship

suggests it was probably produced in a Palestinian or Egyptian workshop. This means the cup in Valencia’s cathedral is likely to have originated from the time of Christ – unlike virtually all other relics with an alleged connection to the Messiah.

Despite its age, the earliest concrete reference to the Holy Chalice is 1399, when a document recorded that a monastery in the Pyrenees handed the relic to King Martin of Aragon in return for a gold cup. Aragonese kings appeared to have had a special interest in the Grail, as an earlier king, James II, wrote to the Sultan of Egypt in 1322 asking to be given the cup that Christ had drunk from at the Last Supper.

The guesswork is probably wishful thinking, but hopefuls can refer to a popular legend that reported the Holy Chalice being brought to Rome in the 1st Century AD by Saint Peter. In 256 it was passed to deacon and future saint Lawrence by Pope Sixtus II. Lawrence reportedly smuggled the relic to his hometown of Valencia, from where the cup ended up in the convent of San Juan de la Peña. The Holy Chalice

remains a major attraction for pilgrims today, and several popes have revered the relic. Their number include former Pope Benedict XVI who celebrated the Eucharist with the Holy Chalice in the Cathedral of Valencia in 2006.

The Grail was royal blood

The Holy Chalice is probably the most credible candidate to be the real Grail – if the Grail

“ ‘Sangreal’ may not have been intended to divide into ‘Sangreal’ (Holy Grail), but into ‘Sangreal’ (royal blood). ”

The book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*

THE ARABIC CHARACTERS

on the Holy Chalice are in the Kufic script style, an early variant of Arabic used from around the year 700. Their precise meaning have been lost.

The first ... GRAIL STORY | 1180

Mysterious poet invented the novel

The Holy Grail first appeared in medieval literature around 1180, when French writer Chrétien de Troyes wrote about a bejewelled Grail that the knight Perceval sets out to find.

The tale inspired many others, and the Grail stories became the medieval forerunner to Harry Potter. Longer stories came into fashion, and Chrétien is a kind of father to the modern novel.

While the Grail legend became widely known, the author of the original story remains a mysterious figure. Historians know little about Chrétien, but the language used suggests he was from Troyes, which gave the poet his last name. Historians are also unable to say for sure where he got his inspiration for the Grail story from.



Chrétien de Troyes wrote before the invention of the printing press, so all his books had to be copied by hand.

**MYTH BUSTER****Treasure hunt**

Caretaker claimed Templar treasure find

The lost treasures of the Templars never left France but were hidden at the castle of Gisors north-west of Paris. Here, Roger Lhomoy uncovered enormous wealth in 1946.

In 1929 Roger Lhomoy was hired as caretaker and tour guide at the ruins of Gisor castle. Lhomoy spent his long evenings alone in the castle engaged in private excavations – probably because he'd heard rumours of a Templar treasure trove. Gisors had been briefly managed by the order, and legend claimed that the Knights brought their treasures to the castle before their arrests in 1307.

After many years of hard physical labour with pick and shovel, Lhomoy reached a secret chapel in 1946 that he estimated to be 30 metres long. According to the caretaker, the room contained 19 stone coffins and 30 coffers containing precious metals – the Templars' treasure.

Unfortunately, no one other than Lhomoy has seen the treasure. He contacted the local authorities after his discovery, and local firefighters were sent to investigate his case, but found only a system of shafts and tunnels that Lhomoy had excavated. The tunnels were narrow, poorly supported and seemed on the verge of collapse. In fear for their lives, the men refused to venture more than a few metres. The authorities ordered the shafts filled in and Lhomoy was fired.

The story might have ended here, but Lhomoy later met author Gérard de Sède, who became interested and wrote a popular book about the entire

affair, *Les Templiers Sont Parmi Nous* (The Templars are Amongst Us) in 1962. The

book sparked renewed interest in Gisors, and finally French Minister for Cultural Affairs André Malraux ordered a large-scale excavation – first with a team of archaeologists and later an engineering division from the army.

However, neither archaeologists nor engineers found anything. After a month's investigation, they concluded that such a large chamber couldn't lie beneath the castle.

If a secret burial chamber had really existed, it would have been found. Furthermore, it's striking that Roger Lhomoy was unable to produce a single piece of treasure from the alleged horde. If the caretaker had genuinely found something, it's not unreasonable to expect him to have taken a souvenir as evidence. If Gisors does hold treasure, therefore, it wasn't found by Lhomoy.

MYTHS IN BRIEF

Roger Lhomoy knew of rumours of a hidden treasure among the ruins of Gisors castle in northern France. In 1946, Lhomoy discovered a secret room deep beneath the castle which contained 19 stone sarcophagi and 30 large coffers filled with lavish treasures.



Roger Lhomoy spent many years digging narrow tunnels under the castle of Gisors.

”

Roger
Lhomoy

was unable to produce a single piece of treasure from the alleged horde.

Gisors was in Templar hands for just three years, but later became Grand Master Jacques de Molay's final prison.



physically exists at all. According to one theory, the Holy Grail is neither cup nor dish, but the physical descendants of Christ.

The theory, best known from Dan Brown's best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, claims that Christ married Mary Magdalene – a woman who, according to The Bible, watched the crucifixion. The theory postulates that Mary was pregnant and fled to France after Christ's execution. Here she gave birth to a girl who later became the matriarch of the **Merovingian** royal family. After its final fall from the throne in the 8th century, the family survived and still exists today.

The theory that the Holy Grail is in fact a royal line is based partly on the fact the French name for the Grail has been misinterpreted. Originally written as a single word: 'Sangreal', it was later split in two – 'san greal' (Holy Grail). The hypothesis claims the split came at the wrong place. It should have read 'sang real' (royal blood).

Secret clues to Christ's marital status, the theory goes on to say, exist in many places in literature and art – not least in Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting, *The Last Supper*.

Here it's claimed the person at Christ's right hand is not the apostle John, but his consort Mary Magdalene. The figure has feminine features, and the V, formed by Jesus and Mary, is an allusion to Mary's womb and her pregnancy. The V-shape is also a reference to the Grail. If the feminine figure was moved to the left hand of Jesus, the person's

head would rest on Christ's shoulder, as would be natural for spouses.

Christ's royal descendants are reportedly protected by a mysterious organisation named the *Prieuré de Sion* (Priory of Sion). Founded in Jerusalem in 1099, the Priory of Sion was established shortly after the Knights Templar as its military wing. Throughout the ages, the Priory assembled an impressive list of grand masters including scientific and artistic giants such as Claude Debussy, Isaac Newton and Leonardo da Vinci. In his capacity as grand master, da Vinci knew the truth and so painted *The Last Supper* the way he did.

The theory is not Dan Brown's own. The author borrowed the concept from the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, which was first published in 1982. It became an international bestseller, and this particular Grail theory gained an even greater following after Brown sent his fictional professor Robert Langdon in search of the Grail.

Authors fooled the whole world

The problem for the theory is that nothing stands up to scrutiny. Thorough investigation led by French researchers have torn the *Holy Blood, Holy Grail's* theory to shreds. No traces of Christ's descendants exist in the historical record, and nothing suggests Mary Magdalene came to France. That she appears in *The Last Supper* is also rejected by art historians. John is usually painted with feminine features, and if the figure was Mary, then John would be missing as there are only 13 people in the painting.

Not even changing the phrase 'san greal' to 'sang real' holds. In the Middle Ages, the Holy Grail was simply written as 'Grail', while in Medieval French, blood was not 'sang' but 'sanc', with the 'c' pronounced as a 'k'. Neither was the Priory of Sion founded in 1099. Although it exists, the organisation wasn't established until 7th May 1956 in the French town of Annemasse near the border with Switzerland as a tenant association whose purpose was to combat property speculation.

It's almost certain the theory that the Holy Grail are Christ's descendants is a hoax, but the hunt for the physical Grail continues unabated in Glastonbury and elsewhere. Grail hunters haven't given up hope of finding the relic, along with the belief that the treasure of the Knights Templar is buried underneath an ancient fortress somewhere in Europe.

Maybe the Grail will indeed emerge to provide its owner with immense riches. But until then, only one person has been able to secure fame and fortune from the myth of the Holy Grail: Dan Brown. ■

MEROVINGIANS

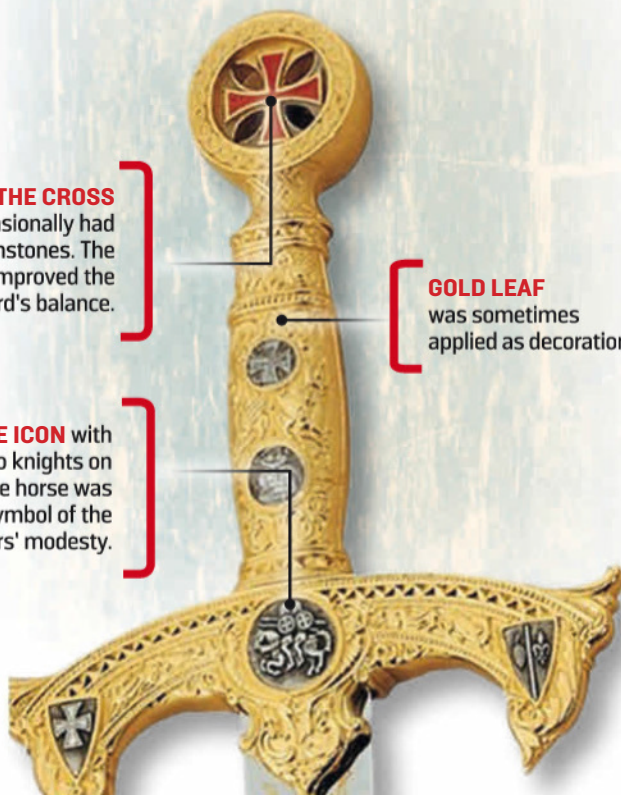
were a Frankish royal family characterised by their long hair, who ruled France from around AD 450 to 751. Their origins are unknown.

Artefact | Sword

THE CROSS occasionally had gemstones. The hilt improved the sword's balance.

GOLD LEAF was sometimes applied as decoration.

THE ICON with two knights on one horse was a symbol of the brothers' modesty.





WHAT WE DO KNOW

The myth of the Grail has existed for centuries

- Stories of the Grail **emerged in the 12th century.**
- Several of the stories refer to the Knights Templar as the **Grail's guardians.**
- The Knights owned **hundreds of properties** and amassed a huge fortune.
- Almost **no valuables were found** when the Knights were arrested in 1307.
- Many **Knights Templar escaped** to places such as Spain and Portugal.
- Some **small collections of coins** have been found, but no Templar treasure.

200

■ claimed versions of the Holy Grail exist in Europe alone. Only a few have been scientifically examined due to the reluctance of the churches holding them. Most of those investigated date from the medieval period, but some are older.



WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

What is the Holy Grail?

1 According to legend, the Holy Grail is the cup that Christ and his disciples drank from at the Last Supper, and/or the cup in which his blood was collected from the cross. But

the Grail has also been seen to represent the descendants of Jesus, while some historians argue that the Grail should simply be seen as **mankind's pursuit for spiritual insight.**

The Knights Templar excavated beneath Temple Mount in Jerusalem where they may have found the Grail.

Did the cup from the Last Supper survive?

2 If the Biblical account is correct, Christ ate with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion and took wine with them from a shared cup. But religious historians are unsure whether to take the story literally. If it is true, that cup may have survived. Perhaps the true Holy Grail remains **hidden in an unknown location**, or maybe one of the 200-odd candidates scattered around Europe is the actual Grail from the Last Supper.

What became of the Knights' treasure?

3 There's no doubt the Knights' treasure has never been found. But historians don't know if its money quietly trickled away over a period of time – for example in the pockets of those Knights who escaped arrest – or whether a huge treasure still awaits discovery. Unfortunately for treasure hunters, there are many places to look. Outside of France, many Knights weren't arrested until after 1307, giving them **time to hide their treasure.** It's also conceivable the order left valuables in the Holy Land, while gold and precious stones may have also made their way to the Knighthood's final Middle Eastern headquarters on Cyprus. In many places, including France, archaeologists have found small collections of coins – but no treasure yet. The dream of a big find remains alive and well.





The Shroud of Turin appears to carry an imprint of a crucified man. Clear details only emerge when the cloth is photographed and viewed as a negative.

IS THE SHROUD OF TURIN REAL OR FAKE?

Radiocarbon dating reveals that the Shroud of Turin was woven in the 14th century. Yet the cloth that contains the faint imprint of a naked man is still viewed as one of history's greatest mysteries. Speculation continues based on ancient written sources as well as new results from the laboratory.

Two priests entered the cathedral in Turin early one morning in April 1988. The men switched off the alarm system and pulled out a heavy wooden box. Inside this box was a silver casket containing what is perhaps the Catholic Church's greatest treasure: a piece of linen four metres long with dark markings that has been revered for centuries. The markings are believed to be an imprint of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth – the burial shroud of Christ.

Under the supervision of the Archbishop of Turin, the two priests spread out the cloth on a long table to allow an expert in textiles to cut three thin strips from one corner. Among those present were Michael Tite from the British Museum. Tite's job was to transfer the strips into metal containers, which the archbishop then sealed.

Only now were agents from the three colleges approved to carbon-date the material allowed to enter the room. They represented the University of Oxford, University of Arizona at Tucson, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich respectively. The archbishop handed each representative four identical, sealed metal containers – one contained a strip from the

shroud, while the other three held samples whose ages had already been confirmed. These blind tests were there to ensure the researchers' methods were sound. The samples would all be tested using radiocarbon (also known as carbon-14) dating.

According to the New Testament, Christ's disciples wrapped his body in a piece of linen cloth after Joseph of Arimathea – a wealthy local man – had it removed from the cross. Catholics around the world believe that an imprint of the Saviour's body was miraculously transferred to the fabric – complete with bloodstains from the crown of thorns and the nails on Christ's hands and feet,

plus the lance wound inflicted by the Roman soldier Longinus – at the moment of resurrection. According to believers, the piece of linen currently stored in the Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista in Turin is this miraculous cloth – the Shroud of Turin, which has survived for almost 2,000 years.

During the summer of 1988, the three research teams from Oxford, Tucson and Zurich completed their tests independently of each other. Each laboratory's conclusion regarding the age of the cloth was roughly the same: it dated from around 1350, meaning the Shroud of Turin actually originated from the late medieval period.

Even if scholars allowed for inaccuracies in the carbon-14 dating technique, the study left

“ It dated from around 1350, meaning the Shroud of Turin originated from the late medieval period.”

LONGINUS is the name of the soldier who, according to the Bible, stabbed Jesus with his lance during the crucifixion. An object purporting to be the lance is kept in Vienna.

no doubt. With 95 percent certainty, the Shroud's cloth was produced sometime between 1260 and 1390, making the likelihood of the Shroud dating from the time of Christ infinitesimal.

The case was settled: the cloth was a fake! The Catholic Church would have to accept that no matter how captivating it might be, the Shroud was just a piece of soft linen no more than 650 years old.

But experts had barely established the Shroud's age by scientific method before the argument flared up again. Other researchers disputed the results of the radiocarbon dating, arguing the cloth may still have covered Christ's battered body. New tests on the fabric and written sources from the period provide ammunition that allows the debate about the Shroud of Turin's authenticity to continue.

Document contradicted the analysis

The Shroud of Turin made its entrance into world history in 1355, when French knight Geoffroi de Charny displayed the cloth in his local village church at Lirey, south-east of Paris. Christians flocked to see the relic that supposedly proved both Christ's existence and his suffering on the cross. Initially, however, the Catholic Church proved sceptical:

"The Dean of a certain collegiate church, to wit, that of Lirey, falsely and deceitfully, being consumed with the passion of avarice, and not from any motive of devotion but only of gain, procured for his church a certain cloth cunningly

painted, upon which by a clever sleight of hand was depicted the twofold image of one man," Pierre d'Arcis, Bishop of Troyes, reportedly wrote to Pope Clement VII in 1389.

In France, rumours spread that the Knights Templar had escaped the persecution of the French king in 1307 and had saved the relic. It's true that Geoffroi de Charny had close links to the now-dissolved Knighthood. 41 years earlier in 1314, his uncle – Geoffroy de Charny – had been burned at the stake alongside the last grand master of the Templars, Jacques de Molay.

If the Templars had possessed the shroud, the Knighthood would probably have done anything to save it, even as the order began to crumble. The

date – 1355 – coincides perfectly with the fact the persecution of the knights was fading into history, giving de Charny the courage to bring the relic to light.

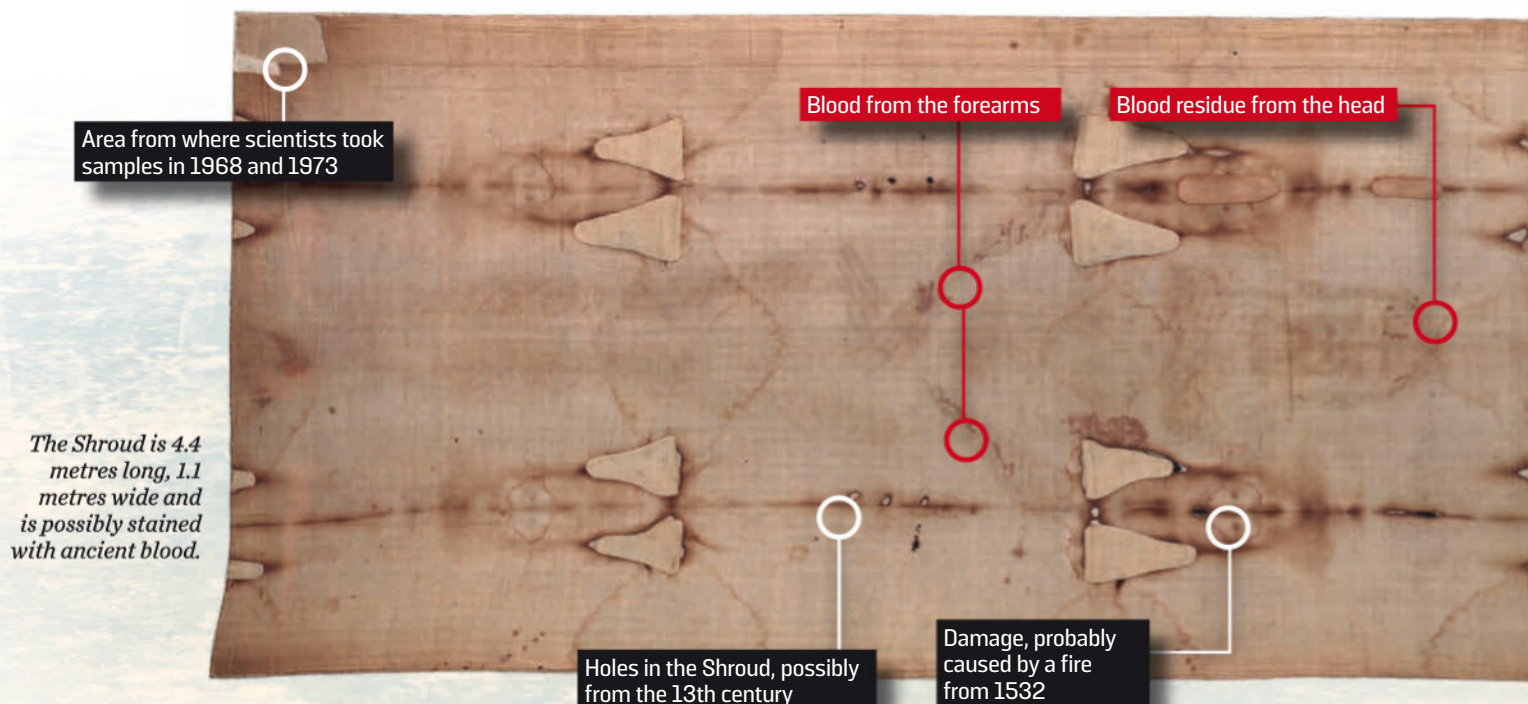
Historians can't dismiss the possibility the Templars may have possessed the Shroud, which would imply it might be

older than radiocarbon dating suggests.

The Knighthood was known for its large collection of relics, and the Shroud of Christ would have been its crown jewel. Several written testimonies from before 1350 tell of an object in the Knights' possession that may have been the Shroud. One such tale uncovered by scholars from the Vatican archives dates from 1287, which describes how young Frenchman Arnaut Sabbatier describes an initiation where he was taken to

“A long linen cloth, on which was impressed the figure of a man.

Knight Templar Arnaut Sabbatier, 1287



The Shroud is 4.4 metres long, 1.1 metres wide and is possibly stained with ancient blood.

“a secret place to which only the brothers of the Temple had access”. There he was shown “a long linen cloth, on which was impressed the figure of a man”. He was instructed to worship the cloth and kiss its feet three times. If the story is true, the Shroud appears older than the 1988 tests claimed.

Chemists cast doubt on the test

The radiocarbon method used to date the shroud makes use of the fact that all living organisms contain the radioactive isotope carbon-14. While the organism lives, its carbon-14 content remains stable. But as soon as it dies, the isotope begins to decay. By measuring the remaining carbon-14 content in organic material, scientists can calculate its age with reasonable precision.

According to the three laboratories involved in the carbon dating, the flax from which the Shroud of Turin was woven was grown between the years of 1260 and 1390. But several scientists dispute this figure. US chemist Raymond Rogers is one such dissenting voice, arguing the corner of cloth that the samples were taken from was part of a later repair, and so the radiocarbon technique had been applied to the newer material. Rogers examined some of the fibres under a microscope and claimed to have found cotton thread woven into the flax. The cotton was difficult to spot and – according to Rogers – wasn’t detected in 1988 because the repair was so good. The cotton had even been coloured to match the natural colour of the linen.

Other researchers estimate other effects – including **a fire in 1532** – may have created chemical changes in the cloth to make it impossible

to determine its age. During the fire, the Shroud’s casket became so hot that the silver melted and dripped on to the cloth, hence the damaged areas.

It’s physically conceivable that such a build-up of heat might have changed the chemistry of the shroud’s fibres. In 1994, Russian chemist Dr Dimitri Kouznetsov conducted several experiments in which he exposed old pieces of fabric of known age to smoke and high temperatures. The results – he determined – showed that their ‘age’ was significantly altered, but no one else has been able to replicate Kouznetsov’s experiment.

In 2013, Italian chemist Giulio Fanti of the University of Padova, in a well-documented experiment, analysed fibres from the shroud using infrared spectroscopy. Professor Fanti concluded that the shroud dated from sometime between 300 BC and AD 400. Fanti also found traces of creatinine and ferritin on the fabric. The professor noted that the presence of these two substances in such high quantities was consistent with people who are under severe physical stress such as torture. The results, according to Fanti, indicate that the garment was not produced by a charlatan working at leisure, but indicate that it may have been wrapped around the crucified Christ.

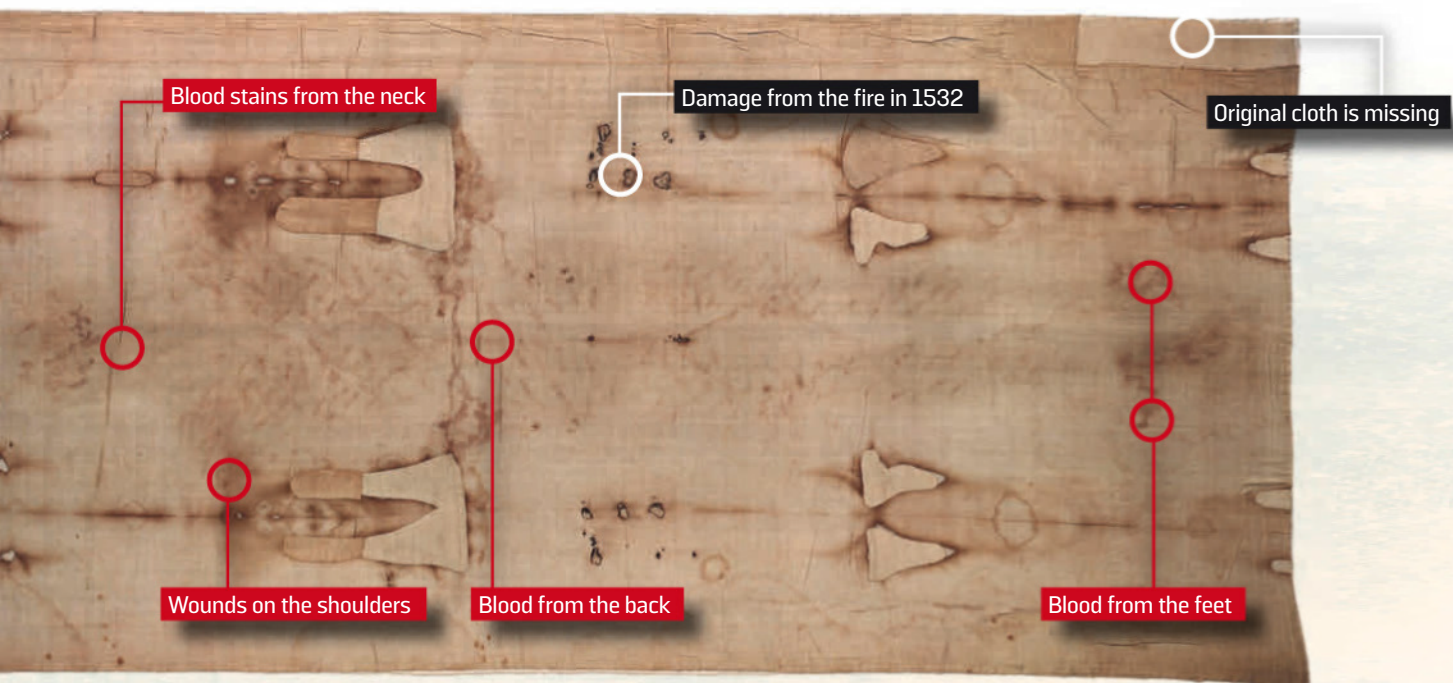
Shroud contained a death certificate

The experiments permitted by the Church in 1988 are quite unique. It’s unusual for scientists to be granted permission to take samples from sacred objects, as the relics can be easily damaged. Consequently, research is usually based on visual examination – and theories exist based

DAMAGE FROM A FIRE IN 1532

occurred while the shroud was kept in Chambéry in France. The cloth had been folded, which is why the damaged areas are symmetrical.

Continues on page 86



From AD 33 to 2015

SHROUD SURVIVED BOTH FIRE AND THE NAZIS

During its long history, the Shroud in which Christ's body was allegedly wrapped has faced countless hardships. But the worn piece of linen has survived and is today one of the world's most controversial objects.

AD 33 Jesus of Nazareth is crucified in Jerusalem and then wrapped in linen. According to believers, his disciples took the cloth and hid it.

1898

Amateur Italian photographer Secondo Pia takes the first photos of the cloth. Pia is shocked to discover a clear face can be seen on the negative.



1694

Pastor Sebastian Valfre makes improvements to past repairs. Later, more patches will be added.

1943

The Germans plan to get their hands on the relic during World War II. But Cardinal Maurilio Fossati manages to transfer the Shroud to Montevergine Monastery, south of Rome, where the relic is hidden under the altar.



1983

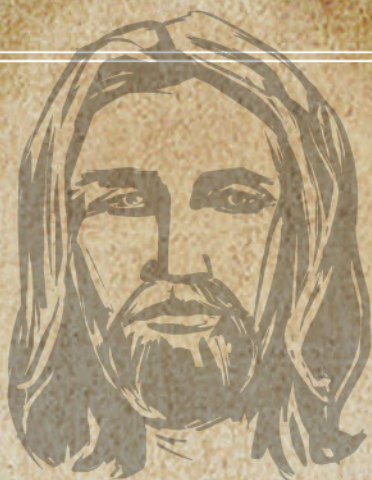
Upon his death, former Italian King Umberto II passes ownership of the Shroud to the Catholic Church.



1988

Three laboratories carry out radiocarbon dating tests, and all conclude that the cloth was manufactured around 1350.

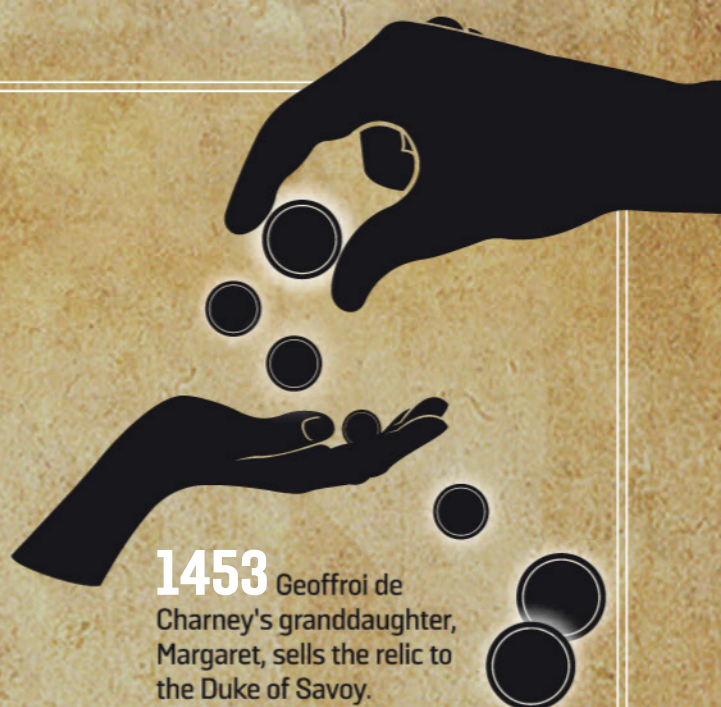




1355 A cloth with the imprint of a man – said to be Christ – is displayed by Geoffroi de Charney, nephew of Knights Templar Geoffroy de Charney who was executed in 1314.



1389 After enquiries, the Bishop of Troyes, Peter D'Arcis, declares that the Shroud is a forgery. The pope bans public displays.



1453 Geoffroi de Charney's granddaughter, Margaret, sells the relic to the Duke of Savoy.



1578 The Shroud is brought to Turin, where it has been kept ever since – primarily in the cathedral.

1532 The Shroud is close to being destroyed by fire in a chapel in Chambéry. Molten silver from the reliquary it's stored in burns holes into the folded linen.



1997 A new fire, possibly deliberate, nearly destroys the Shroud. It's rescued by a firefighter who smashes through bulletproof glass to reach it.

2010 Over two million visitors see the Shroud at an exhibition in Turin.



2015 A new study of pollen and DNA residues from the Shroud is published. Researchers conclude the material supports the idea the Shroud's origins are medieval, but do not exclude other possibilities.



Relic | Crown of thorns



on those observations. Yet even such simple techniques have aroused curiosity about the Shroud, for additional details within the fabric seem to contradict the belief it's a medieval fake.

The imprint of the human figure is naturalistic and completely free of the deification that otherwise characterised Middle Ages art. A potential counterfeiter must therefore have had his or her own unique style of painting and at the same time possessed great knowledge of human anatomy. The marks of the nails which the Romans, according to the Bible, used to secure Christ to the cross are placed in the man's wrist – not in the palms. This is for good reason: a nail would not have been sufficient to bear the crucified's weight (if nailed through their palm, the hand would tear and the condemned would fall down). Yet, in almost all medieval depictions, Christ is hung with nails through his hands.

Another revealing detail that the artist had rendered was that the blood on the figure's forearms ran upwards. The direction makes sense, for Christ hung on the cross with his hands at head level, so that blood from his wounds ran toward his body.

Other close-up studies of the cloth have also yielded surprising observations. In 2005, Italian palaeographer Barbara Frale made a discovery that changed the course of research into the Shroud. Frale works in the **Vatican Secret (now Apostolic) Archive**, which despite its name is not secret – its

designation refers to the fact the archive is private and contains the Vatican's most important papers. As part of her job, Frale analysed photographs of the Shroud that had been taken in connection with previous studies.

When the palaeographer had enlarged the photos sufficiently, she could make out almost invisible wording in several places on the cloth. Frale managed to identify the words 'Jesus Nazarene' written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

Frale believes the words were originally written on small papyrus scrolls that Roman officials attached to the Shroud after the crucifixion in order to identify Christ's body. The scrolls were secured with a flour-based glue, which enabled the ink to seep through, leaving faint imprints on the Shroud.

The palaeographer also believed she'd found the word 'iber' on the cloth. She claimed it to be part of the name of Tiberius – Emperor of Rome at the time of Christ's death. It would be natural for Roman officials to list the emperor's name as a form of official documentation. Frale also believed to have found text on the Shroud that indicated the person was sentenced to death. The words prompted Frale to dub the Shroud Christ's "burial certificate".

Researchers had previously noted there might be writing on the cloth during a previous study in 1978, but according to Frale, interest in the possible wording evaporated after the Shroud's carbon-dating in 1988.

Disciple brought Shroud to Turkey

If the shroud is authentic, there is a huge gap in its history, namely the period between Christ's crucifixion in around AD 33 and its first public appearance in 1355. In the absence of reliable sources, scholars have tried to map the shroud's path from Jerusalem to a village church in France.

It may seem an impossible task, but small, obscure pieces to this puzzle may be on the Shroud itself. Apparently, the city of Edessa, part of modern-day Turkey, may have played a key role in its early history. At the time of Christ, Edessa was ruled by King Abgar. According to Eusebius (260-340), bishop and early church historian, the king was one of Jesus's earliest followers – and even wrote to him during Christ's lifetime: "I have therefore written to you to ask you if you would take the trouble to come to me and heal all the ill which I suffer. For I have heard that the Jews are murmuring against you and are plotting to injure you. But I have a very small yet noble city which is great enough for us both."

Jesus politely demurred: "It is necessary for me to fulfil all things here for which I have ►

THE VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVE

contains 85 kilometres of shelves loaded with documents. The oldest ones date back to the 8th century.

According to the Bible, John the Baptist was beheaded, and his head brought to King Herod on a platter. Several churches today claim to possess parts of John's skull.



been sent, and after I have fulfilled them thus to be taken up again to him that sent me. But after I have been taken up I will send to you one of my disciples, that he may heal your disease and give life to you and yours."

After Christ's ascension, Abgar was visited by Thaddaeus, one of the 12 disciples who were sent out, according to the New Testament, to spread the Saviour's teachings. Thaddaeus reportedly brought with him a cloth bearing the image of Christ – known as the 'Mandylion', which also became a legendary relic. Today, at least two different Catholic institutions claim to be in possession of the image – the Vatican in Rome and a church in Genoa.

It's unlikely that either of the two Mandylions are real, which leads us back to the Shroud of Turin path to 1355:

some scholars speculate that the cloth Thaddeus brought to Abgar was, in fact, the Shroud of Turin.

They also hypothesise that for the next several hundred years the Shroud lay hidden in Edessa, only emerging again in 525 after a major flood. Local legends tell that a piece of cloth with markings similar to Christ's face was found in a sealed container.

The cloth was described as *acheiropoieta* (made without hands) and over the following centuries became the focus of ceremonies and processions in Edessa. In the 7th and 8th centuries, iconoclastic beliefs grew among Byzantine Christians, who wanted to follow the commandment laid out in the Old Testament: "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

Iconoclasm led to the destruction of numerous treasures, but the Shroud escaped. Edessa was



The Knights Templar claimed to have held the most sacred relics of Christianity – including a fragment of Christ's cross, which they carried before them in battle.

conquered by Muslims in 639, and many Christian objects from the city have survived to this day. Repeated Christian armies attempted to shake Edessa from Muslim control – among them was Byzantine general Johannes Curcuas, who besieged the city in 944.

The encircled Muslims must have feared for their city, because – according to some sources – the general was able to strike a deal: if he received the image of Christ, he would release 200 prisoners of war, pay 12,000 silver coins and leave the city in peace. In August 944 the triumphant general took the image to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) where he was given an enthusiastic welcome. The Shroud arrived, according to sources in the city, in a triumphal march on 16th August – a date that's still celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Church in Istanbul.

Several accounts of an object that might be the Shroud exist from Constantinople. One example saw the archdeacon of Hagia Sofia Church, Gregorius Referendarius, mention in a sermon a piece of cloth that had the imprint of the whole body of Jesus. Gregory specifically mentions that

“ And miraculously,
just as he made
everything from nothing ...
he imprinted the reflection
of his form on the linen.

Gregorius Referendarius

he could see marks from the side wound that the Messiah received from a soldier's sword. The sermon dates to the 12th century and can be found in the Vatican's archives. In the same century, English Benedictine monk Ordericus Vitalis, usually regarded as reliable, described a piece of cloth containing the image of Christ.

Constantinople looted

Another indication that the cloth may have existed earlier than 1350 can be found in the Hungarian capital of Budapest. The Pray Codex, a manuscript named after the abbot who discovered it in 1770, György Pray, dates from the turn of the 13th century. One of its illustrations depicts Christ's burial,

and the image is strikingly similar to the Shroud of Turin: Jesus is unusually portrayed as being completely naked, his hands covering his crotch. Only four fingers are visible on each hand, and the fabric depicted appears to have a herringbone pattern – very similar to the Shroud's weaving.

If the cloth was in Constantinople in the late 12th century, the relic may have disappeared in 1204, when the city was looted by the Crusaders during

Continues on page 94





How was the imprint on Christ's Shroud formed?

If the Shroud of Turin is a fake, it's incredibly well done. More than 700 years ago, the forger created an image of the crucified Messiah using a method no one can explain. Based on available techniques in the Middle Ages, scholars have focused on four different theories, one of which is by far the most plausible.

THEORY 1: Chemical reaction

Body with 40° temperature emits 'image'

Forgers may have wrapped the cloth around a living person or fresh corpse, which then transferred its features on to the cloth. Raymond Rogers of the Los Alamos National Laboratory has observed that bodies can discolour fabric at temperatures of just 40 degrees Celsius.

This process is a variant of the Maillard reaction that occurs in connection with frying and baking at 140–165° C but may also occur at lower temperatures. Rogers believes the Shroud could have been discoloured in this way before bloodstains and other details were added later.

PROS AND CONS:

- + The method is simple and easy to perform.
- ÷ Wrapping the cloth around the person would create a skewed image.
- ÷ Details on the Shroud would have been difficult to transfer via such an imprint.
- ÷ The image would not have been long-lasting.
- ÷ There are no traces of sugar on the Shroud.

The cloth is treated

- 1 Sugar substances are naturally present on the cloth or applied as a thin layer.

Gases leak out

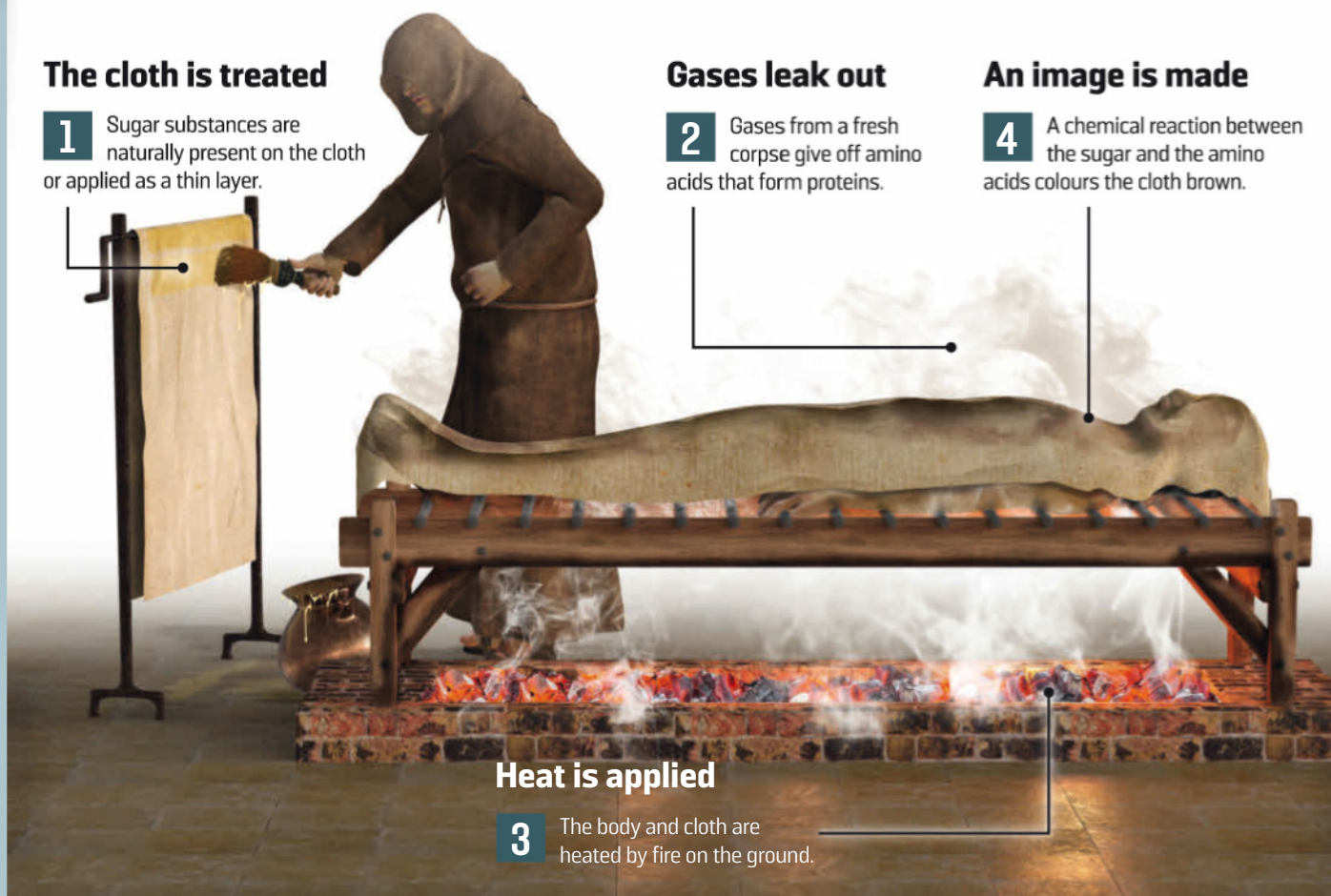
- 2 Gases from a fresh corpse give off amino acids that form proteins.

An image is made

- 4 A chemical reaction between the sugar and the amino acids colours the cloth brown.

Heat is applied

- 3 The body and cloth are heated by fire on the ground.



THEORY 2: Primitive photo

Forger combined urine with patience

Several researchers have suggested that the image was created using some form of photographic process. Of course, modern photography didn't exist in the Middle Ages, but some, including South African art historian Nicholas Allen, have speculated that an early variant could have been used.

Silver nitrate, which is used in photographic films, was probably known in the 1300s, and exposure in a dark room would have been possible. Exposure would take place over several days, and a liquid such as urine could subsequently be used to 'attach' or fix the image to the cloth.

PROS AND CONS:

- + A photographic process fits with the image being a negative.
- + Methods of photographic recording were known in the Middle Ages.
- + There are no other examples of this technique being used.
- + The image would not have been as detailed.
- + The method requires ideal weather conditions over several days.

The subject is exposed

- 3** A piece of fabric hangs in a darkened room, treated with photo-sensitive silver nitrate. The subject is exposed through the lens.

Body is prepared

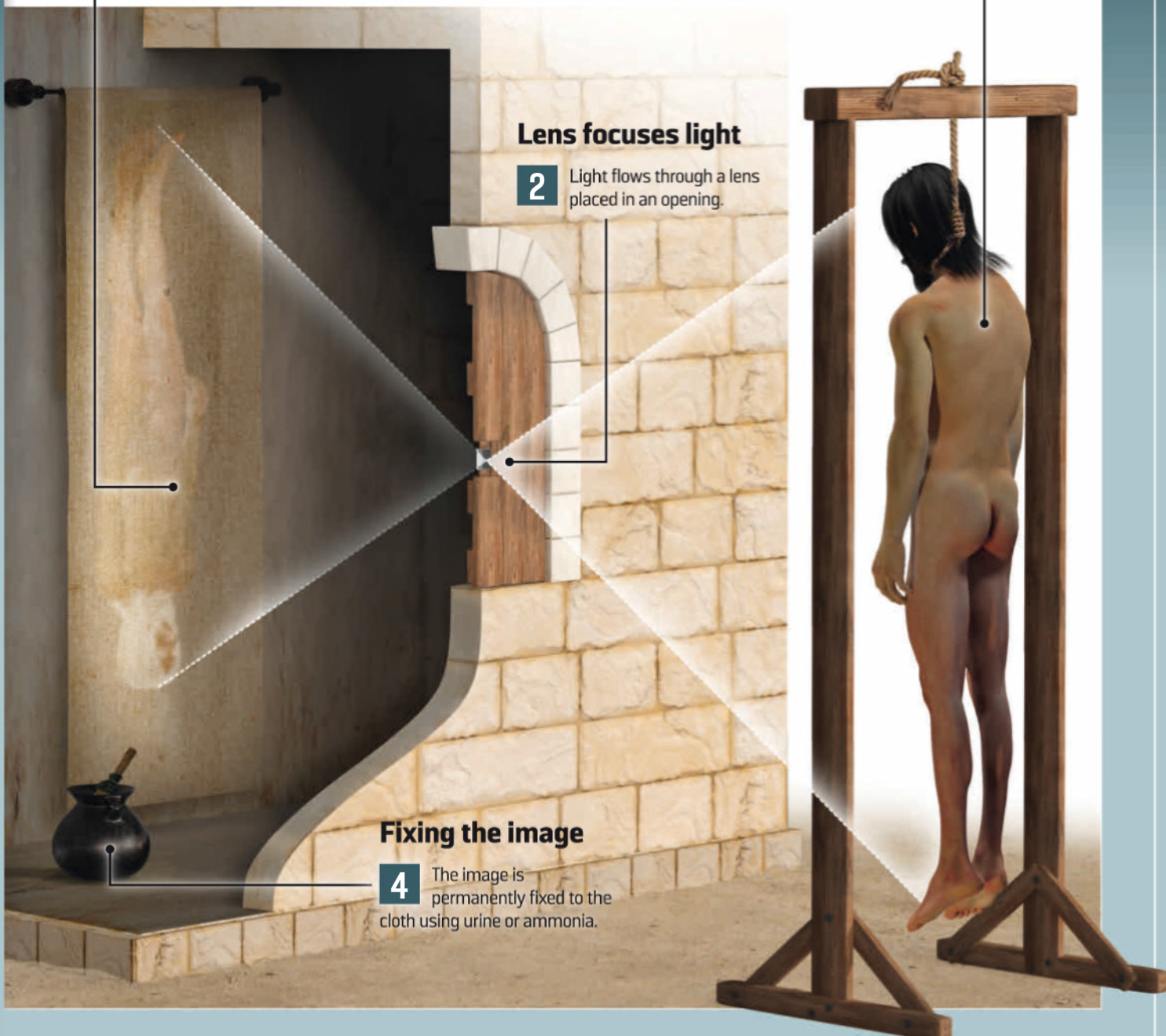
- 1** The corpse or cast of a person is hung up and exposed to daylight.

Lens focuses light

- 2** Light flows through a lens placed in an opening.

Fixing the image

- 4** The image is permanently fixed to the cloth using urine or ammonia.



Missing paint amazes scientists

Perhaps the most obvious explanation for the imprint is that a human figure was painted on to the cloth. For a medieval scammer, a brush and paint would be the most obvious tools. However, researchers have found virtually no traces of paint on the cloth. The fact the impression is a negative

would also make great demands of the artist. Furthermore, the wet paint would probably have sunk into the fabric. Under a microscope, it's evident that the staining is found only in the upper layers of the Shroud's fibres. But the project might still have been feasible using a very fine brush.

PROS AND CONS:

- + Paint was easy to obtain.
- + A painting was relatively easy to do.
- + Only a few traces of paint or colour are evident on the cloth.
- + Markings on the cloth are found only in the outermost layers of the fibres.
- + Painting a negative would have required an extremely talented painter.

In 1982 Artist Walter Sanford painted a picture (left) to show how the imprint might have been created.



Dyeing is superficial

A Close-ups taken by photographer Mark Evans in 1978 show that dyes are found only in the upper layers of the fibres. Paint would probably have penetrated deeper into the cloth.



Ochre was the painter's favourite

B When he investigated the Shroud in 1978, US chemist Walter McCrone determined that the 'bloodstains' were actually red ochre pigments. Ochre has been used as a dye in paint since ancient times and is extremely durable.



THEORY 4: Strong electric current

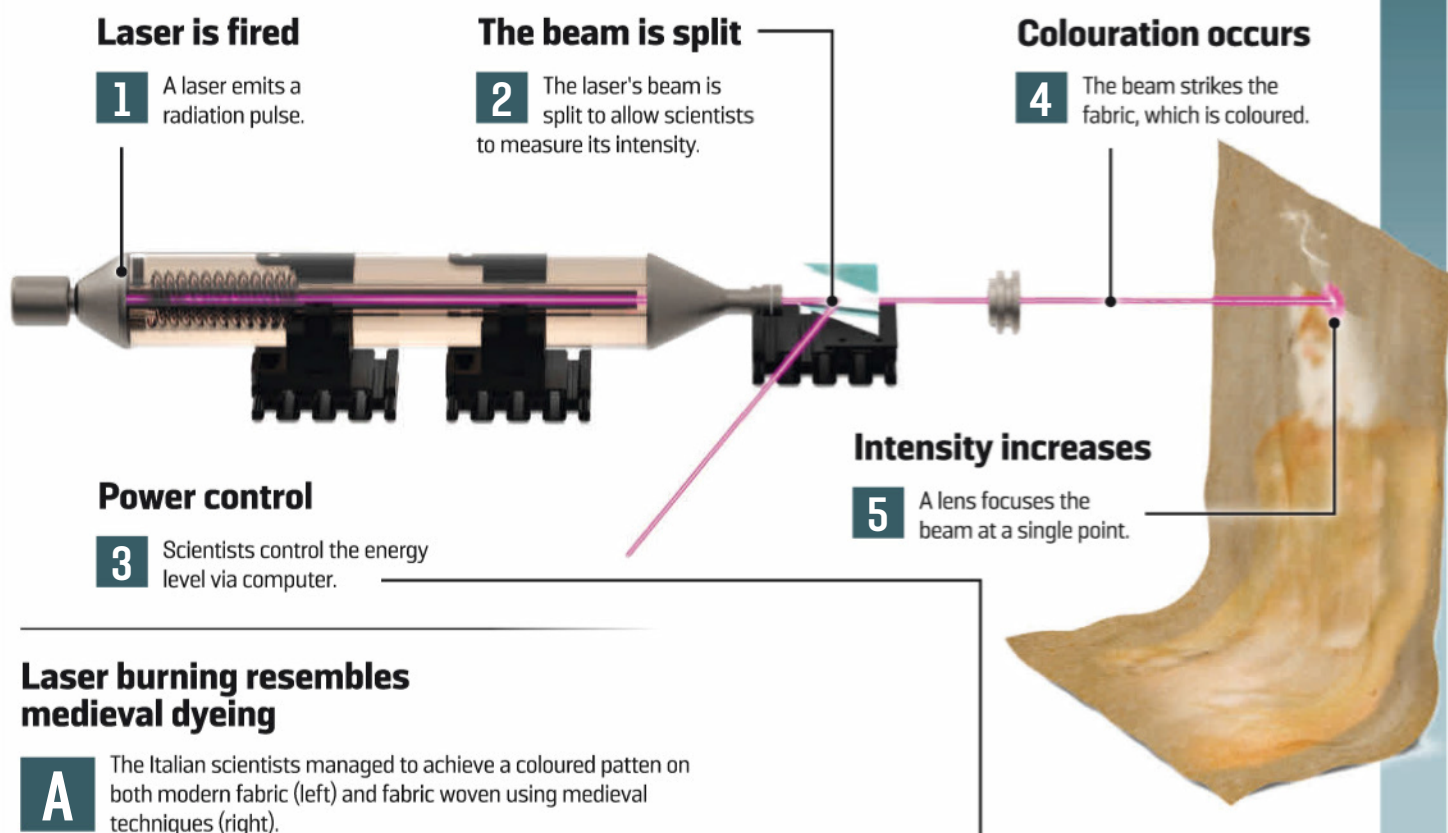
Electricity produces exact copy

One of the most extreme theories is that the image was created by some form of energy discharge. Italian chemist Giulio Fanti of the University of Padua, together with a research team, demonstrated that electric pulses from a laser can create similar staining of matter. Using modern equipment, scientists

recreated imprints that resemble those on the cloth. The discolouration, however, required a high level of energy, but the team didn't believe the image could have formed any other way. It's unclear how this could have been produced in the Middle Ages or have radiated from a body.

PROS AND CONS:

- + Radiation can create an image that is very similar to the imprint on the Shroud.
- + The generation of electricity was an unknown technology in the Middle Ages.
- + Controlling electrical radiation would be very difficult.
- + The rich detail on the Shroud would be difficult to achieve – especially the fine shades between light and dark brown.



Laser burning resembles medieval dyeing

A The Italian scientists managed to achieve a coloured pattern on both modern fabric (left) and fabric woven using medieval techniques (right).



Giulio Fanti (seated) created an image similar to that on the Shroud using a powerful laser.

the failed Fourth Crusade. The Knights Templar didn't participate in this crusade, but the order's relic collectors may have been offered the Shroud afterwards. Some sources say that it initially came to Greece and was kept in a villa near Athens owned by a French nobleman with connections to the Knighthood. The Shroud may have travelled from here to France in the mid-13th century.

Knights kept relic hidden

If the Shroud was stolen in Constantinople, it could explain why the Knights did not publicly claim to be in possession of the relic: anyone caught participating in the looting faced expulsion from the church, and it was the same penalty for those caught in possession of stolen objects from the city. Moreover, the order may have wished to keep the precious object out of the reach of the French king, Philip IV. Philip, known as 'the Fair', was heavily in debt and would have undoubtedly tried to sell the Shroud if he'd got hold of it.

Also, for purely practical reasons, the Shroud would be valuable to the order. In the 13th century, the Knights Templar had many former Cathars in their ranks. The Cathars were a Christian sect who, contrary to prevailing Catholicism, believed that the Messiah was a divine spirit who did not have a body. The Church made every effort to annihilate the heretical sect, and many of its members took refuge in the Knights Templar. To integrate the Cathars into the order, the knights could greatly

benefit from an object that provided evidence of Christ's physical existence.

In 2009, another piece of evidence emerged to potentially confirm that the Knights Templar possessed the Shroud of Turin in the 13th century.

Barbara Frale was in the process of translating unpublished medieval documents when she came across Knight Templar Arnaut Sabbatier's aforementioned testimony from Philip IV's reign.

Frale is convinced that the linen Sabbatier kissed is the Shroud displayed today in Turin Cathedral. In the 14th century, while there were numerous pieces of cloth in circulation that claimed to have Christ's image on them, they were much smaller than the Shroud and only depicted his facial features.

Thorns and nails came at a premium

The 14th century, when Christ's Shroud emerged from the mists of history and was first exhibited in Lirey's church, was a dark time for humanity. The Black Death claimed millions of lives and people sought comfort in their faith. One way to get closer to God was to worship a relic – a sacred object associated with the Messiah or a Christian saint.

A wave of relics swept through Europe. Everything from splinters from the cross and body parts from Christian martyrs to small vials purported to contain the Virgin Mary's breast milk all circulated within ecclesiastical circles and among ordinary believers. The Church admittedly banned all trade in relics, but nonetheless, merchants and monks made fortunes from selling objects such as small boxes that allegedly contained a fragment of the apostle St Peter's bones – which were worn around the neck.

Relics also triggered a surge in tourism. Europeans were willing to travel across the entire continent to see, for example, Christ's portrait in the Mandylion (in both Rome and Genoa), Longinus's lance (in Vienna) and the earthly remains of the three wise men (in Cologne). The most popular pilgrimage sites – those containing the most sacred relics – could make a fortune from their pilgrim guests. Often, the sanctity of a city was based on its stock of relics – especially objects related to the Messiah. Therefore, countless churches and cities claimed to be in possession of the same relics. For example, one count shows that there were more than 700 holy thorns from the crown that was, according to the Gospel of John, placed on Christ's head by Pontius Pilate.

The battle for the crown of thorns ended in 1239, when the Byzantine emperor John III

Relic | Relic of the Precious Blood

THE PHIAL of Christ's blood in Bruges, Belgium is made from gold and crystal.

POPULAR LEGEND says the phial came to Belgium in the 12th century via knights fighting in the crusades.



Pieces of the True Cross are scattered across Europe

In the Middle Ages relics flowed into Europe – including fragments from the 'True Cross'. None of the pieces can be dated to the crucifixion, yet churches across the continent claim to possess genuine pieces of the cross.

The monastery of Santo Toribio de Liébana is home to **Europe's largest piece of the True Cross**. The relic, which itself takes the form of a cross, measures 63 cm high by 39 cm wide.

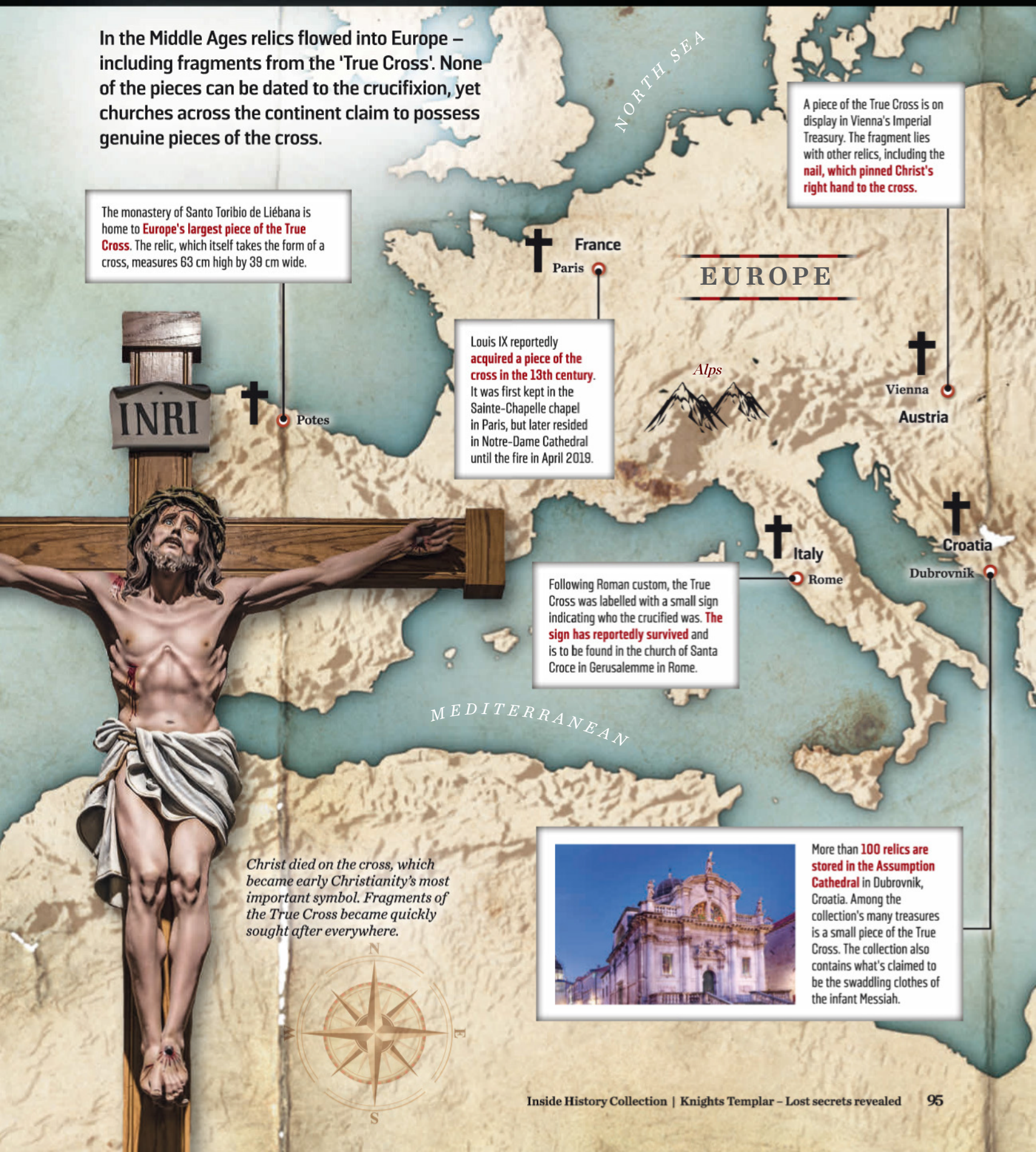
A piece of the True Cross is on display in Vienna's Imperial Treasury. The fragment lies with other relics, including the **nail, which pinned Christ's right hand to the cross**.

Louis IX reportedly **acquired a piece of the cross in the 13th century**. It was first kept in the Sainte-Chapelle chapel in Paris, but later resided in Notre-Dame Cathedral until the fire in April 2019.

Following Roman custom, the True Cross was labelled with a small sign indicating who the crucified was. **The sign has reportedly survived** and is to be found in the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome.

Christ died on the cross, which became early Christianity's most important symbol. Fragments of the True Cross became quickly sought after everywhere.

More than **100 relics** are stored in the **Assumption Cathedral** in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Among the collection's many treasures is a small piece of the True Cross. The collection also contains what's claimed to be the swaddling clothes of the infant Messiah.





Heat and gas date the wood from Christ's cross

Titulus Crucis is a piece of walnut measuring 25 by 14 centimetres. The relic is in a church in Rome and is said to have been part of the True Cross. Radiocarbon dating proves otherwise.

The radiocarbon (also known as carbon-14) dating method is a tool for determining the age of biological material. All living things contain carbon-12 and -14. As soon as an organism dies, carbon-14 decays with a half-life of 5,730 years, while carbon-12 remains stable. By measuring the amount of carbon-14 relative to carbon-12, researchers can determine its age. Radiocarbon dating from 2002 revealed the Titulus Crucis dates from AD 980 to 1146.



"Jesus the Nazarene king of the Jews" is inscribed in Hebrew on Titulus Crucis. The letters are faded.

The text is repeated in Greek and Latin – in both cases incorrectly written from right to left.

The wood is walnut. Walnut was commonly found, but expensive and rarely used for crucifixions.

A small sample is taken

- 1 Scientists take a sample from a corner of Titulus Crucis. A 3-mg sample is sufficient for a carbon-14 analysis.



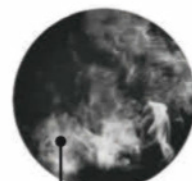
A fragment weighing a few milligrams is enough for a sample.

Carbon is isolated in a lump

- 2 Contaminants are chemically removed before the sample is burned to convert all carbon to CO₂. Using hydrogen, the carbon dioxide is pressed into a small block of pure carbon.



Combustion



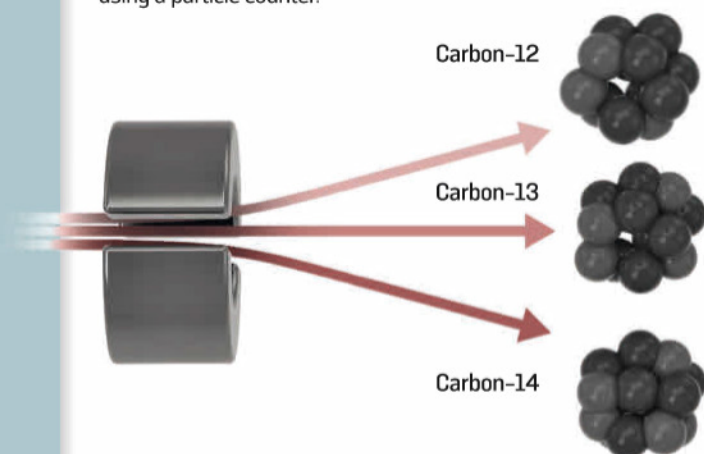
Gas



Pure carbon

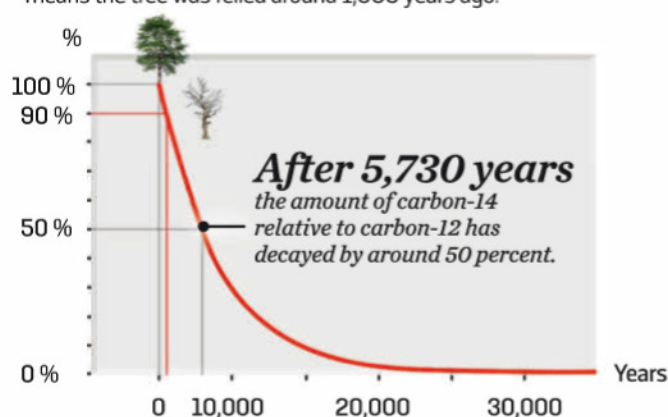
Isotopes are separated by magnets

- 3 The carbon block is bombarded with ions to separate the three isotopes: carbon-12, -13 and -14. Two magnets sort the isotopes by mass, after which their number can be determined using a particle counter.



Age is read from a chart

- 4 The ratio of carbon-12 to carbon-14 particles is calculated and the result is entered into a table. The number of carbon-14 atoms in Titulus Crucis is about 90 percent, which means the tree was felled around 1,000 years ago.



sold the remains of his crown to King Louis IX of France. The Frenchman already possessed two crowns – but immediately proclaimed the new one as the genuine article. Today the crown is in Paris, while other sacred crowns are on display in various locations across the world, including Britain.

The nails from the cross were also in high demand. The New Testament didn't say how many nails were put through the Son of God's wrists and feet, but if all the nails present in churches around Europe are genuine, then the Romans must have used more than 30. One of the most famous is in the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome. According to the church's own history, this particular nail was found by the Empress Helena who went on a hunt for relics in Jerusalem in AD 325.

That divine powers were attributed to these relics is no wonder. Saints and martyrs who'd been venerated by the church possessed special powers according to the faithful. Even the smallest fragment of a martyr's little finger protected its owner from danger and ensured happiness and prosperity.

A golden age for charlatans

Such interest naturally created a market for swindlers. Across Europe organised criminal gangs produced fake relics on assembly lines and sold them. Corpses were dug up from cemeteries, their bones sold as saintly relics. Thorn branches were plaited and presented as fragments of Christ's crown of thorns while old, worn-out clothes were passed off as the Virgin Mary's mantle.

The wealthy Catholic Church in Rome could of course pay for relics en masse, but as the Middle Ages progressed, other cities also acquired significant relics to attract Christian travellers.

In the 12th century, pilgrims flocked along the route to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, where the remains of James the Elder lay. The apostle James was one of Christ's disciples and, according to the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, was beheaded by Herod Agrippa, king of Judea, after James refused to renounce his Christian faith. Subsequently, his relatives smuggled his corpse to Santiago, where – rumours claimed – it was discovered in 830.

The English also went on pilgrimage – primarily to Canterbury, where relics said to work miracles could be found. Such towns flourished through pilgrim visits, as it was customary for pilgrims to bring precious offerings.

Soon, hundreds of towns, cities and villages across Europe could boast of being the burial place of saints – or at least claim that the local church contained holy men and women's earthly

remains. The worship of sacred relics would have continued if **Martin Luther's** revolt against the Pope and Catholic Church hadn't intervened. Lutherans considered relics to be non-Christian, and so a great clean-up of Protestant churches began: wooden fragments from the cross and dried-up remnants of martyrs were thrown out.

Even Catholics started to question whether relics were genuine, and an ecumenical council had to be called to revive the veneration of saints and relics. The Council of Trent took place in Trento in northern Italy across a series of sessions between 1545 and 1563, and led to the Counter-Reformation against Protestantism.

Christ's cross could fill an entire ship

The mountain of relics also included pieces of wood from the cross on which Christ was crucified. The Knights Templar believed they were in possession of the True Cross and carried it in front of them – until the relic was captured by the Muslims after the Battle of Hattin in 1187.

Whether the Templar cross was genuine is questionable. Many others claimed to possess the original, and countless pieces of Christ's cross were in circulation throughout the Middle Ages. Protestant reformer John Calvin wrote scornfully in the 16th century that "if we were to collect all these pieces of the true cross exhibited in various parts, they would form a whole ship's cargo".

Even today, churches and monasteries claim to have a genuine fragment of the cross on which the Messiah was crucified. The Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome even exhibits a piece of wood that is claimed to have sat on the cross as part of its inscription. Titulus Crucis, as the relic is called, simply means "title of the cross".

In 2002, Titulus Crucis was radiocarbon dated by the Roma Tre University to the period AD 980-1146 – most likely around 1020. But as with the Shroud of Turin, the results were immediately disputed by other scientists – first and foremost those with a Catholic background. Critics argued the object could have been contaminated with foreign material – for example, while the Titulus Crucis was displayed on a church wall.

Other scholars like German historian Michael Hesemann pointed to the relic's inscription, "Jesus the Nazarene king of the Jews", which is written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. According to Hesemann, a number of palaeographic experts dated Titulus Crucis ➤

MARTIN LUTHER

published the *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517, which criticised the worship of relics and marked the beginning of the Reformation.

“Corpses were dug up, their bones sold as saintly relics. Thorn branches were presented as Christ's crown of thorns.”

Relic | Nails from the Cross

NAILS, which were used for crucifixions, were made from iron.

ROMAN NAILS were usually square and up to 20 centimetres long.



to the first few centuries after the birth of Christ, based on the form and style of the letters shown.

Refugees brought relic to Spain

Doubt is also a constant companion when historians discuss another famous relic, the Sudarium of Oviedo. The **Sudarium** is a piece of cloth measuring 84 x 53 cm, which – according to the Gospel of John – covered Christ's face in the tomb after he was taken down from the cross.

The Sudarium is stored in the Cathedral of San Salvador in the Spanish city of Oviedo, and unlike the Shroud of Turin does not carry an actual image of Jesus. It does, however, contain stains which believers claim to be Christ's blood.

The Sudarium of Oviedo has been examined several times using radiocarbon dating. This put its likely date at around 700, which roughly fits with the fact the Sudarium can be traced to the late 7th century, but no earlier.

Historians have also examined the Sudarium and unanimously picked apart the story of its journey to Spain. The legend was first recounted by a bishop named Pelagius, who worked in Oviedo in the early 12th century. According to Pelagius, the Sudarium came to Seville with Christian refugees who fled the Persian invasion of the Middle East in 614. Here the cloth was handed over to the bishop of Seville, Leander.

But historians know that Leander died around the year 600, more than a decade before he allegedly received the Sudarium. In addition, historians have uncovered Bishop Pelagius as the medieval answer to the 18th century soldier and mythomaniac Baron von Münchhausen. Pelagius forged, amalgamated and edited documents to present him and the city of Oviedo in a more favourable light. The bishop's efforts

in the Spanish-speaking world has given him the nickname *El Fabulador* (The Fabulist).

There is no doubt that most Christian relics we know of today are fake. However, researchers have only been allowed to investigate a few, which is why the Shroud of Turin is so fascinating, because scientists have had several opportunities to analyse the ancient cloth.

Church detectives found blood

One of the most thorough investigations took place in 1978, when the Shroud of Turin was handed over for six days to the research group STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project). In its final report in 1981, STURP concluded that the red patches on the cloth were actual blood and that the imprint was not the result of an artist's work. But

its researchers could not explain how the image had appeared.

The STURP report had barely been published before other scientists pointed out that the researchers had not examined the shroud thoroughly enough for certain properties, such as

fragments of paint. Sceptics also pointed out that the researchers at STURP were not objective, but carefully selected – the majority were Catholics and members of a council advocating its authenticity.

Yet even now it's impossible to get a definitive answer as to whether the Shroud is real or fake. For now, science's clear radiocarbon dating is at odds with historical sources that seem to speak against a medieval origin. The pursuit of answers continues, but regardless of the outcome, the Shroud will continue to have immense symbolic significance to believers. The Catholic Church has never officially accepted its authenticity, but in the words of Pope John Paul II, the Shroud "is also an image of God's love as well as of human sin". ■

” Bishop Pelagius is seen as the medieval answer to the 18th century mythomaniac Baron von Münchhausen.

SUDARIUM was the name given to cloths used in the Roman Empire to wipe the face clean during ceremonies.



WHAT WE DO KNOW

The Shroud of Turin has a long history

- The Shroud was first mentioned **around the year 1355**.
- Radiocarbon dating has **dated the cloth to between 1260 and 1390**.
- Scientists can't determine **how the image of Christ came into being**.
- According to the Bible, Jesus was **wrapped in a cloth** after the crucifixion.
- Historical sources **mention a shroud** as early as the 6th century..
- Sources say the Knights Templar **possessed a shroud-like cloth**.

40

■ milligrams was the weight of each sample taken from the Shroud tested by British, Swiss and US labs. They unanimously dated the cloth to around the year 1350.



WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Are the stains blood or paint?

1 Although scholars can't definitively say as to what the spots on the Shroud are, they are **not likely to be blood**. The spots have remained a bright, reddish colour and have not turned black with age as blood usually

does. A research team has performed a thorough chemical analysis to look for blood traces. The substance on the cloth does not contain as much iron as normal blood, and the researchers found the presence of "insoluble reddish granules".

How was the cloth woven?

2 Close-up studies reveal the Shroud was woven using the herringbone weave technique, where the cloth's threads form a herringbone pattern, often synonymous with parquet floors.

This weaving method was **widespread in the Middle Ages** and is a strong indication that the cloth was manufactured around the year 1350. So far, researchers have been unable to find any examples of herringbone weave dating from the time of Christ.

What shroud did the Knights Templar revere?

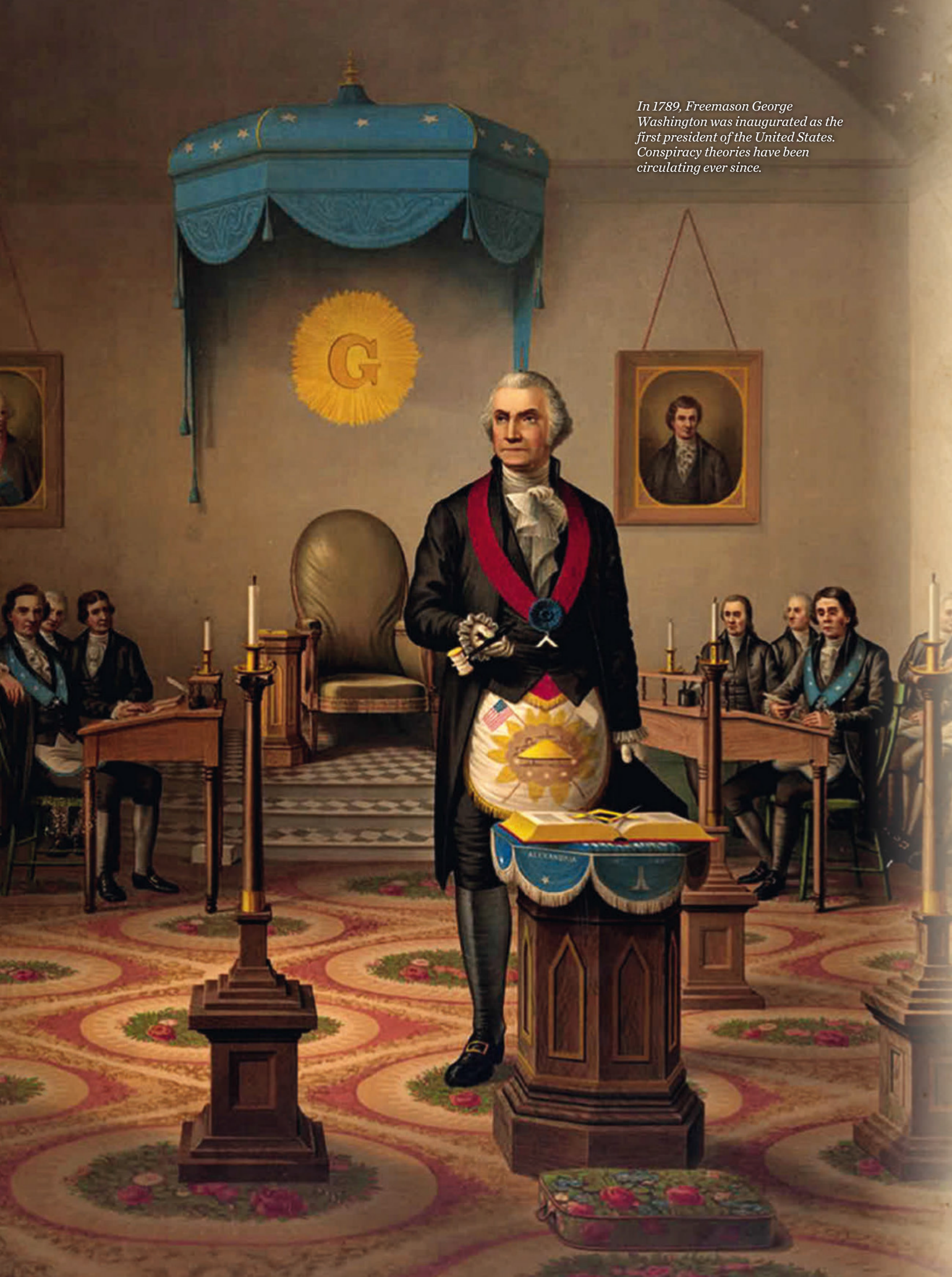
3 The Vatican's archive has revealed that some of the Knights Templar were presented with a cloth containing the imprint of a man during ordination. This cloth **vanished from history with Jacques de Molay**, the order's last grand master. Where it is nobody knows, but historians would be surprised if all traces of such an important relic have been lost forever.

The Knights probably managed to save parts of their treasures and other relics. Only if this cloth reappears, or historians uncover new documents, will we come closer to an answer as to whether the Knights Templar really possessed the Shroud of Turin – and where they obtained it from.

It's possible that the Vatican's archives hold new information about the mysterious shroud using by the Knights Templar.



In 1789, Freemason George Washington was inaugurated as the first president of the United States. Conspiracy theories have been circulating ever since.



SECRET HEIRS OF THE TEMPLARS

In 1717, London craftsmen founded the first Grand Lodge of the Freemasons. But Freemasonry goes back far further and historians are still trying find links to the Knights Templar. **Important clues include fleeing knights, unwelcoming guilds and the construction of magnificent cathedrals in Europe.**

Three heavy blows on the door signify the arrival of the Apprentice. Blindfolded, he is led by a group of Freemasons into a lofty hall where the ceremony is to take place.

The newcomer blinks as hands deftly remove the blindfold. At first, he can see very little, because the hall is dimly lit, and heavy curtains cover its narrow windows. Above him, the ceiling is painted midnight blue, and scattered with glittering stars that represent the constellation Orion. The muffled sound of organ music reaches his ears. The new arrival looks around. In the dim, yellow light of three candelabras placed in a triangle on the floor, he sees three brothers standing before him. The men are dressed in dinner jackets, with aprons around their waist. The new initiate wears a white shirt, which leaves his chest and left arm exposed. One brother grasps the bare arm, while another grabs the right one. The third brother raises a wooden hammer and hits the Apprentice on the forehead. The man tumbles backwards and lands in a coffin lined with soft, black fabric.

The rituals of Freemasonry are fiercely guarded secrets, but several sources report that a hammer

blow and lying in a coffin are a central part of the order's initiation ceremony. They symbolise the death and resurrection of the Freemason into a new consciousness, with wisdom and insight. However, there is an alternative explanation. Like many Masonic rituals, the death scene is linked to the Knights Templar, who officially disappeared from history over 700 years ago after being hunted down and executed.

Officially, the Masonic order goes back 300 years, but the lodge is actually much older. Although its origins are obscured by the mists of time, historians have been able to find clues that link the Knights Templar to the Freemasons. And the story begins in Scotland.

“ The third brother raises a wooden hammer and hits the Apprentice on the forehead. The man tumbles backwards and lands in a coffin. ”

Knights reach Scotland

It has been suggested that some of the fleeing Templars found asylum in Scotland in 1307. Here, on the very edge of Europe, it's rumoured that the Knights entered the service of the king, **Robert the**

Bruce, who was fighting for independence from England. The Scottish forces were weaker than those of their powerful neighbour to the south, and seemed to stand no chance. However, under the direction of Robert the Bruce, the English were defeated in a series of battles – with the help of former Templars. The Knights received a rapid and thorough education in Scottish military

ROBERT THE BRUCE

was king of Scotland from 1306 until his death in 1329. He secured Scotland's independence in a series of battles against the English monarchy.

Symbolism | Ring



THE TEXT refers to the fact that only members who come of their own free will are admitted.

THE SQUARE AND COMPASS reminds the order of its past as ancient builders.

tactics at the Battle of Bannockburn on 24th June 1314. An enormous Scottish army, armed with bows and primitive spears, fought against the superior weapons of the English, but as the Scots were close to defeat, a horde of Knights appeared, with crosses on their tunics. It is said that the sight was so terrifying that the English fled in panic.

ELIAS ASHMOLE

collected curiosities throughout his life. His collection is on display at the world's first university museum, the Ashmolean in Oxford.

Afterwards, the Templars settled in Scotland, first in the Western Isles and later in the cities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Here they discovered a community that shared a bond with them: the desire to build magnificent cathedrals. These churches were built by masons who wandered from place to place to do their work, but who consequently found it difficult to gain entry to traditional craft guilds. These guilds, which

regulated various trades, were limited to specific towns. Instead, the nomadic Masons formed their own associations, where they could discuss such topics as pricing and negotiation techniques.

Such co-operation outside of the guilds was illegal, so the builders began to meet in secret. These gatherings of masons were known as lodges, which was originally the term for the huts and workshops used by the craftsmen while building the cathedrals. For the Knights Templar, who were also talented builders and wanted to preserve their community and values, these lodges became the perfect meeting place.

From the middle of the 17th century, the lodges began to attract learned men who were neither masons nor any other type of craftsman. The reason why they became gathering places for society's elite is still an enigma, but perhaps they attracted men of culture and science because of the rumours of the Freemasons' wide knowledge and tolerance, as well as the opportunity they offered to discuss the new thoughts and ideas of the age without the risk of imprisonment.

Secret diaries

Among the first outsiders to be included in the Freemasons' exclusive association was **Elias Ashmole**, an English lawyer and scientist. Ashmole's own diary tells of his admission to the order.

"I was made a Freemason in Warrington, Lancashire," wrote Ashmole in 1646. And true to the order's rules of silence, this entry was the only one he made about the Masonic order for 35 years. More than three decades later, he wrote a

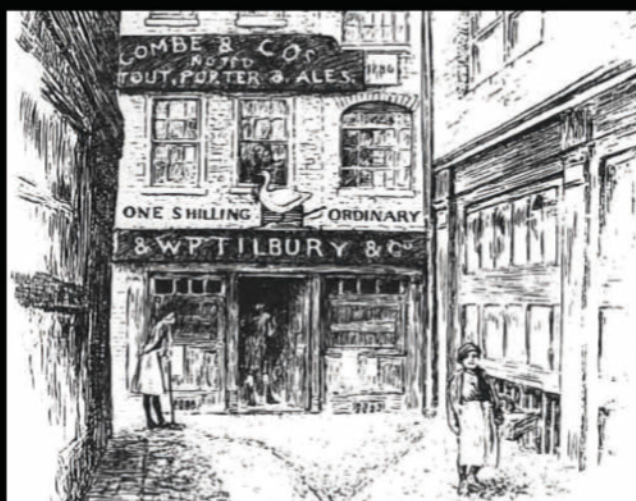
The first ... **GRAND LODGE** | 1717 |

London lodges originally met at a pub

The official history of the Freemasons began modestly enough. The first known grand lodge was established on 24th June 1717 at the Goose and Gridiron tavern in central London.

The grand lodge was the result of four smaller lodges, their origins forgotten, merging together. The members decided to meet four times a year to maintain communication between the brothers. The group's ambitions grew rapidly and the fraternity soon attracted the foremost scientists, artists and writers of the day; nobility and members of the royal family also joined.

The grand lodge's ideals were co-operation and personal development, but the inclusion of so many famous individuals meant the order was seen as a meeting place for the elite.



London's first Masonic lodges were named after the taverns in which they met. The Goose and Gridiron (above) no longer exists.



The early meetings of the Masonic order were often drunken gatherings in small taverns. Here, in his painting *Night*, the painter William Hogarth – who was a Freemason himself – portrayed a servant guiding his inebriated master home after an evening at the lodge.

few lines about a magnificent dinner he attended to celebrate newly admitted members. That was the last such entry in his diary, but we know that in the years following Ashmole's inauguration, the number of Freemasons increased significantly.

This was the time of civil war between Royalists and Roundheads. The hostilities and ensuing chaos, including conflicts between Protestants and

Catholics, led a lot of people to seek membership of the order. Wealthy citizens appreciated the lodges, where there was no obligation to discuss religion or politics, and they could instead turn their discussions towards other worldly topics.

The first lodges met at taverns and inns, where the

Freemasons rented a room for the evening. In small parlours, behind closed curtains, the brothers shared knowledge and performed secret rituals, as the Knights Templar had done 500 years earlier. However, according to the Freemasons themselves, their secret rituals did not originate with the order of the Knights. The Freemasons' origins went back even further. This is confirmed in the book *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, a type of manual for Freemasons, published by the Scottish priest and Freemason James Anderson, in 1723.

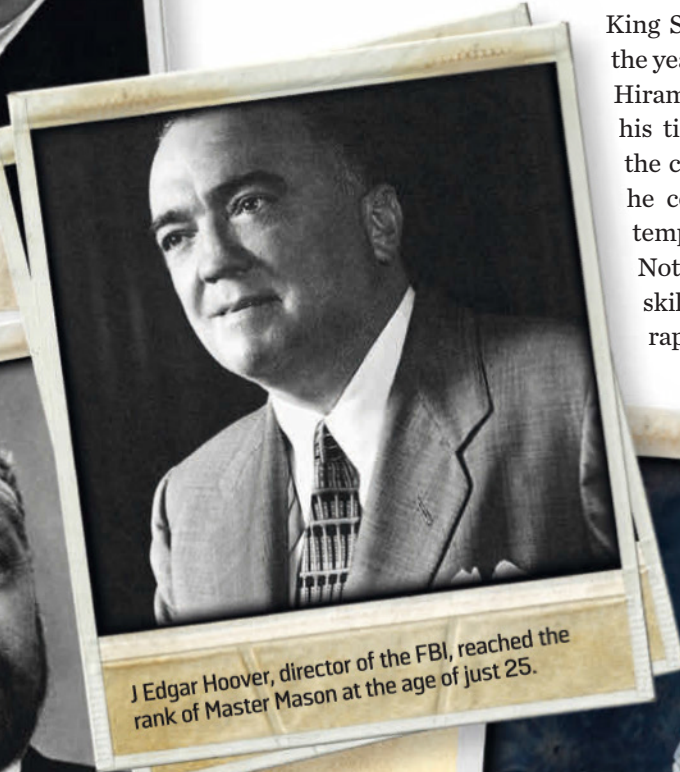
Murdered with a hammer

According to Anderson, the origins of the Freemasons lay – like that of the Knights Templar – in Jerusalem. The story is a little long and convoluted, but it explains, among other things, why the carpenter's ruler, square and hammer are such important parts of the order's symbolism.

Anderson states that a temple was built by King Solomon in central Jerusalem, around the year 900 BC. The temple's master builder, Hiram Abiff, was the most accomplished of his time, and was taken by Solomon from the city of Tiro in present-day Lebanon, so he could oversee the construction of the temple. Solomon had made a good choice. Not only was Hiram wise and technically skilled, but he also had an impressive rapport with his workers. Legend has it that although the



The comedian WC Fields was a Freemason in Philadelphia.



J Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, reached the rank of Master Mason at the age of just 25.



Gustave Eiffel, along with other members of his family, was a Freemason.



Winston Churchill was admitted as an Apprentice in 1901.



According to conspiracy theories, Buzz Aldrin performed secret Masonic rituals when he walked on the moon.

parties couldn't understand each other's language, they developed coded signals consisting of special words, gestures and touches that enabled them to communicate on the construction site.

However, not everyone was on good terms with the builder. Three of his men – the mason Jubela, the carpenter Jubelo and the blacksmith Jubelum – were lazy and greedy. The men wanted to be promoted and earn more, but they couldn't work their way up, so the layabouts made a plan: one by one, they would confront and threaten their master, and press him to promote them immediately.

When **Hiram** arrived at work one day at the south gate of the temple, Jubelo stepped forward. He made his request, which Hiram promptly rejected. Furiously, Jubelo lifted his ruler to strike Hiram's throat. However, the carpenter aimed too low and instead hit his master on the shoulder. Astonished, Hiram ran to the west gate, where to his great surprise he was met by Jubela, who made the same demands. Hiram again refused and received a severe blow to his chest from Jubela's square, which was made of iron. Desperately, Hiram continued to the east gate of the temple, where Jubelum was waiting. When

Hiram rejected him, too, Jubelum lifted his hammer and struck Hiram aggressively. This time, the blow was a direct hit. The hammer hit Hiram Abiff in the middle of his forehead and the builder fell to the ground – dead.

In Anderson's tale, the builder's secrets were lost, and his knowledge lives on only in the traditions and signs that he taught his workers, and which, according to the myth, are still used by Freemasons today. In later stories, Solomon carved Hiram Abiff's knowledge into a stone that he buried with the dead builder under the temple.

” The three tools had symbolic significance: the ruler stands for accuracy and precision, the square for virtue, and the hammer for determination.

Seeking insight

The story is impossible to confirm, but Hiram Abiff remains a shining role model for Freemasons who strive for wisdom and knowledge. The three tools used in the murder also have symbolic significance

for the order. The ruler stands for accuracy and precision, the square for virtue, and the hammer for determination.

The points on the body at which Hiram's attackers aimed are also loaded with meaning. The first blow was directed at his throat, which is home to physical life. The second was aimed at his heart, which is where the soul dwells, and the third was to the forehead, which is the home of intelligence. The names Jubela, Jubelo

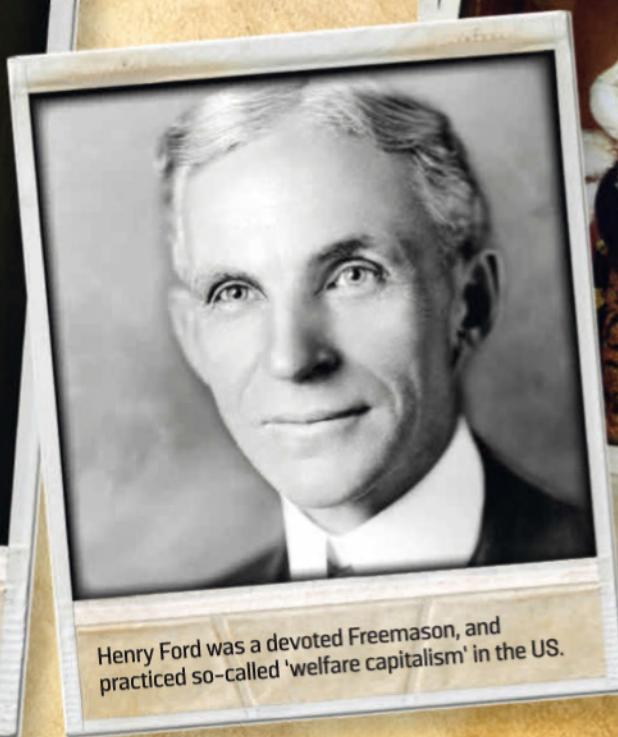
HIRAM

was a popular name in ancient times and was used by Phoenician kings, among others. The name is still in use today.

Continues on page 108



Mozart became a Freemason in 1784 and composed several pieces for the order.



Henry Ford was a devoted Freemason, and practiced so-called 'welfare capitalism' in the US.



Napoleon's older brother Joseph became a Freemason in 1785.



INTERVIEW

Chris Hodapp, born in 1958, is an expert in Masonic history.

American Chris Hodapp has written books on the Knights Templar, Freemasons and other secret societies. He is a lecturer and frequently contributes to TV documentaries.

Teenagers pay tribute to the last grand master

Ever since a Scotsman explained to his fellow Freemasons that the order was brought from the Holy Land by Knights, they've fostered a connection to the Knights Templar. Today, young boys can be admitted to an order named after the last grand master of the original Knights, and Christians can join the Knights Templar lodge.

? What is the link between the Knights Templar and modern-day Freemasons?

Freemasons have been fascinated with the Knights Templar for hundreds of years – and that enthusiasm continues to thrive. Some Freemasons actually see themselves as direct descendants of the Knights Templar, and the order's 700-year-old traditions and concepts of honour, among other things, are still fostered in connection with the many rituals of Freemasons.

? Where did the Freemasons' connection to the Knights Templar originate?

The link can partially be traced back to Andrew Michael Ramsay, a Scotsman who lived most of his life in France. In 1737, Ramsay gave a famous lecture, the so-called Ramsay's Oration, in which he argued that Freemasonry had arisen in the Holy Land several thousand years ago, and that Crusaders brought the organisation's secrets to Europe. Enthusiastic Freemasons embraced Ramsay's idea and began to spread the

word. From the 1750s, we have British documents that tell of special Knights Templar lodges within the Freemasons, and around the same time, the model began to take root in the United States.

? Is there evidence to suggest that Ramsay was right?

We don't have direct evidence, but we do know that the Knights of western Europe owned hundreds of preceptories, fortresses and houses, which were built in a relatively short time. Someone must have erected these buildings, and nothing indicates that the Knights ever got involved with stones and chisels themselves. Many were professionally constructed and still stand today. Hired masons must have been behind the buildings. Some historians guess that travelling masons were hired by the Knights and were influenced by their customs and ways of thinking. These masons joined together in lodges, which followed the traditions of the Knighthood. So, it can be argued that Freemasonry grew from the customs of the Knights.

? How did a medieval idea become so popular among the Freemasons of the 18th century?

In the 1600s and 1700s, Freemasonry moved away from being a professional association for masons to becoming a social club, with many of the prominent figures of the day as members. The

numerous new brothers who joined liked the idea of being descended from noble knights of old, rather than a bunch of calloused stonemasons.

? Why did the Freemasons see themselves reflected in the Knights?

Ever since the dissolution of the order in 1312 and the martyrdom of Grand Master Jacques de Molay, the Knights Templar became something of a cult phenomenon, and in the 18th century, interest exploded. As the Knights were so renowned, the order was an obvious choice for the Freemasons to associate themselves with. King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were even imprisoned in the ancient Knights' headquarters

In the 1700s, Freemasons began to cultivate the idea they were of noble descent.

in Paris, the Temple. In fact, Napoleon became so tired of followers of the Knights Templar making pilgrimages to the Temple that he ordered the building destroyed in 1805.

Which groups consider themselves direct descendants of the Knights?

There is an order that calls itself simply the Knights Templar. Freemasons can enter this order alongside their regular lodge. Some Knights Templar members insist that their traditions and degrees come directly from the Templars of the past. The Knights Templar also re-enforce the connection by meeting in so-called preceptories, and members must learn how to handle a sword. The order also uses the ancient symbol of the Knights Templar – two knights on one horse.

What requirements are there for joining the modern version of the Knights Templar?

The order requires members to be Christians; usually, Freemasons only require a belief in a higher being. Knights Templar members also swear to protect and defend the Christian faith, exactly like the Knights Templar in 12th and 13th century Jerusalem. And the order is only open to Freemasons with a good reputation, who have been through the whole degree system, and have become Master Masons.

How widespread is the Knights Templar today?

Far from all Freemasons go into this order, but in both the United States and Britain, the lodge is quite popular. There are also

The Order of DeMolay is for boys between 12 and 21 years old. The order, like the Knights Templar, pursues loyalty and respect for all that is sacred.

many other organisations that continue the legacy of the Knights, such as the Order of DeMolay, named after the grand master of the Knights Templar. The order is for boys between the ages of 12 and 21, and cultivates values such as loyalty and respect for all that is sacred, in the same way as the Knights Templar. Many boys from the Order of DeMolay later became Freemasons.

Does the idea of there being a link to the Templars continue among Freemasons?

The idea gained new traction in 1989 when a historian called John J Robinson wrote the book *Born in Blood*, which popularised the idea of the Knights as ancestors of Freemasonry. The book became a huge hit among Freemasons and led to a large influx of new members

who were fascinated by Robinson's account of the Knights, their symbolism and secrets – and the possible link to Freemasonry. Since then, Robinson's book has been followed by many more on the same subject.

Why is the Knights Templar still so interesting to the Freemasons and other similar clandestine groups?

The Knights Templar is the ultimate mysterious secret society of the past, always in the shadows, never completely gone – almost a precursor to the Illuminati. The Templars were brought down by their secret rituals, and their immense treasure has never been found. Thousands of Knights disappeared in 1312 never to be seen again. The mythology just keeps growing, and all those loose ends are attractive to secret societies.



The Temple Church in London fascinates Freemasons, like so many things associated with the Templars.

and Jubelum were used in rituals regarding the Freemasons' promises of silence and allegiance to the order. Additional symbolism is attributed to the hammer that killed Abiff. Today, when Freemasons strike a brother on the forehead with a hammer before promoting him, they are re-enacting the murder of Abiff and invoking the wisdom of their spiritual ancestor.

Drinking clubs

After the first meetings at small inns and taverns, the order grew so large that the brothers began to form larger lodges.

On 24th June 1717, the members of four smaller lodges in London decided to meet four times a year to keep each other informed and – more importantly – organise a large party each year. However, it's likely that the brothers didn't limit their festivities to one annual celebration; there's plenty of evidence to suggest that the regular meetings often became wild parties with masses of food and drink.

The artist and satirist William Hogarth was a member of the lodge himself, but that didn't stop him from making fun of his brothers' excesses. In

the painting *Night*, he portrayed a brother, rolling drunk and unsteady on his feet, weaving his way home from a merry evening at the lodge.

The Freemasons' lodges were named after the taverns in which the members usually gathered, and drinks were naturally served during the meetings. The brothers typically came from the upper echelons of society and appreciated good food and drink. Among ordinary citizens, the lodges gradually earned a reputation as upper-class clubs, with their rich members falling down drunk after consuming too much beer and wine.

However, despite some decidedly 'thirsty' members, the lodges also cultivated ideas of science and enlightenment. One of the first members of the London Grand Lodge was the author and satirist Jonathan Swift, who found an audience there for his social criticism. And the Grand Lodge's grand master, the scientist

John Theophilus Desaguliers, introduced modern scientific thought to the brothers.

The Freemasons' curiosity and open-mindedness acted like a magnet for well-educated men in the 18th century. Soon, public figures and

” There's plenty of evidence to suggest that the regular meetings often descended into wild parties of gluttony and inebriation.

Rosslyn Chapel | Symbolism of the Knights

In his book *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown links the Freemasons and the Knights Templar in some sort of conspiracy. At the centre of the plot is the Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland.



While difficult to make out, the figure – according to conspiracy theorists – depicts **TWO KNIGHTS ON ONE HORSE**, which is one of the symbols of the Knights Templar.



THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR apparently adorn the windows of the Rosslyn Chapel. Although the order was disbanded over a hundred years before building began, some believe the Templars were behind the construction of the unusual church.

Freemasonry embraces the highest moral laws and will bear the test of any system of ethics or philosophy.

General Douglas MacArthur

War hero Douglas MacArthur became a Freemason in 1936, in the Philippines.

royalty began to flock to the lodges to get a taste of the finest intellectual thinking of the time. New grand lodges sprang up in every corner of the UK.

European tour

From its British origins, Freemasonry spread to other parts of the world, and historians have traced how the lodges made the leap across the English Channel to mainland Europe.

During the 18th century, young upper-class men traditionally embarked upon a grand tour, an educational journey around the capitals of Europe, where they could experience foreign culture and admire the sights. As these young British men travelled, they took the concept of Freemasonry with them, and lodges shot up everywhere from Poland to Portugal. At the same time, the growth of the British Empire took Freemasonry



Conspiracy theorists believe that the pillar is decorated with a **STRAND OF DNA** – allegedly evidence that the 15th century Templars possessed a remarkable level of knowledge.



around the globe. Despite gaining new members, however, the Masonic order changed very little. The rules of admission remained largely the same down through the centuries – only men over a certain age were accepted, and a new Freemason was not admitted unless recommended by other brothers in the lodge. The order did everything it could to preserve the secrecy and mystery surrounding its rituals, in spite of the influx.

The secrecy, however, did not prevent leaks, and – worse – wild stories quickly began to flourish. The deadly symbols of the order, such as skulls and coffins, fired the imagination. Rumours circulated of Freemasons drinking each other's blood, worshipping the Devil, and even sacrificing virgins.

These stories scared people and gave the pope a pretext to intervene. In 1738, Pope Clement XII forbade Catholics from joining the Freemasons and other secret societies. In reality, he probably feared entering into ideological competition with the Freemasons, who weren't Christians as a rule. The Catholic Church's aversion to Freemasonry has been reiterated many times since then. Even in the 20th century, from 1918 to 1983, any Catholics joining the lodge were excommunicated automatically.

Lodge blamed for Revolution

This condemnation of the brothers had little effect, but things took a more serious turn when, in the late 1700s, the order was accused of being behind the French Revolution.

The political upheavals that took place from 1789 to 1799 marked the end of the monarchy in France and led to the death of King Louis XVI

and his queen, Marie Antoinette. The events left sovereigns throughout Europe quaking in fear. The Freemasons were blamed for the Revolution, because the liberal-thinking attitude of the lodge reflected the revolutionary ideas of freedom, equality and fraternity. This claim also breathed life into rumours that Freemasons were seeking world domination. In many countries, the monarchy imposed severe restrictions on the order.

Gradually, however, it became clear that the fear was exaggerated. And today, historians question the connection between the Freemasons and the French Revolution. Admittedly, **Georges Danton**, one of the early leaders of the Revolution, was a Freemason, and the French part of the order – the Grand Orient de France – was politically active, but nothing suggests that Freemasons, as such, played a leading role.

Tea time

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, similar upheavals were taking place, and here the Freemasons did play an active role. The British had established colonies in North America at the beginning of the 17th century, and those territories supplied Britain with tobacco, sugar and other exotic goods. A number of Freemasons were among the first colonists, and in 1730, North American brothers acquired their own grand master in New York.

As in Britain, American lodges attracted educated men. However, as the century progressed, they had more than just rituals and secret meetings to think about: unrest was also growing. The colonists were fed up with King George III and his ministers. Although they

Rumours circulated of Freemasons drinking each other's blood, worshipping the Devil, and even sacrificing virgins.

GEORGES DANTON

was a French lawyer and politician who agitated for revolution in 1789. He was executed in 1794.

FREEMASONS WERE BOUND BY ANCIENT RULES



SILENCE

A Freemason must under no circumstances reveal the secrets of the lodge. He must also remain silent in meetings and listen to what others have to say. He may only speak when the other people in the conversation are quiet and have time to listen.



RESTRAINT

Restraint is crucial in assessing one's own qualities and abilities. A brother in the Freemason order must believe in himself and act according to his conviction, but must never be tempted to believe that his own view is the ultimate truth in any given matter.



CAUTION

A Freemason must exercise great caution when assessing the words and actions of others. Their choices may seem strange or outright offensive, but Freemasons should respond by trying to understand. Intolerance and condemnation harm both individuals and society.



MERCY

In every situation, a Freemason must be humane and merciful. The lodge recognises that the rule can be hard to live by, because loving deeds are often met with ingratitude, but it's imperative to do one's best all the time.

**MYTH BUSTER****Conspiracy**

Freemasons will take control of the US

Hidden forces are working to take over the United States. At least, that's what conspiracy theorists believe. They see evidence of their version of reality everywhere – including on the dollar bill.

The Freemasons were behind the American revolution against British colonial power and later orchestrated the formation of the new nation, the United States. And the Freemasons want more than that. The organisation is behind a **comprehensive conspiracy** aimed at taking power in the United States and then throughout the world.

This view is widespread among conspiracy theorists, who also believe that another secret organisation, the Illuminati, is involved in the revolutionary plans. Evidence of the conspiracy is clearly visible: the large seal of the United States, reproduced on dollar bills, shows an incomplete pyramid with a watchful eye over it. The eye is a symbol of both the Freemasons and the Illuminati, and the year 1776, written in Roman numerals beneath the pyramid, is the year of the creation of the Illuminati. The text makes the case crystal clear: below the pyramid is written "Novus ordo seclorum", which translates to "New World Order".

The evidence doesn't bear scrutiny, though. The US' great seal was introduced in 1782, while the all-seeing eye first appeared as a Masonic symbol 15 years later, with the publication of Thomas Smith Webb's book *The Freemason's Monitor*. According to US professor and Freemasonry expert Margaret Jacob, the eye is also not unique to the Freemasons. The symbol has been used in many settings and can be seen in a number of town crests, especially in Eastern Europe.

The year 1776 does not refer to the formation of the Illuminati in its homeland of Bavaria, but is

simply the year of its establishment in the United States.

The 13 layers of the pyramid represent the 13 original states. The fact that the pyramid is unfinished is a reference to the work of building the new nation, which was still in progress. The text below the pyramid, "Novus ordo seclorum", according to coin and banknote expert Mark Anderson, should be translated as "A new order of the ages", which expresses the desire of the founders of the young nation for a better future.

There is also no evidence that Freemasons have been working in secret to seize power in the US. Yes, 14 presidents have been Freemasons, but they haven't hidden their membership or allowed the activities of the lodge to affect their lives or their office.

Even less likely is the idea of the influence of the Illuminati. The organisation was dissolved in the 1780s in Germany, and any association carrying the name today has no connection with the original Illuminati.

MYTHS IN BRIEF

The image and text on the American dollar bill originate from the Freemasons and are a sign that the lodge will take over the USA. The eye over the pyramid indicates that secret powers are watching everything, and the text states that a new world government will replace the US as a nation state.



The strange symbol on the dollar bill is linked to both Freemasonry and the Illuminati.

“The eye is also not unique to the Freemasons. The symbol has been used in many settings.

Benjamin Franklin was a Freemason and helped found the United States.



*At their inauguration, new
Masons agree to have their
tongue ripped out if they ever
reveal the secrets of the lodge.*



had no representation in British politics or say over legislation, the settlers were subject to taxes and duties on imported goods, such as tea. On the night of 16th December 1773, the growing discontent came to a head.

Sources show that the St Andrews Masonic Lodge in Boston closed early on the evening of 16th December, due to low attendance. The letter T was entered several times in the lodge's records, so few historians doubt that the Freemasons played a role in the event that has since become known as the Boston Tea Party.

A few hours later, activists disguised as Native Americans sneaked aboard three British schooners and emptied 342 chests of tea into Boston's harbour.

This act was the beginning of a process that culminated in the colonies declaring independence and founding the United States of America three years later. Members of the Sons of Liberty organisation were behind the Boston Tea Party, but many of the participants were also Freemasons. In 1776, a number of influential colonists – landowners, traders and businessmen – gathered in Philadelphia to prepare the American Declaration of Independence, which formalised the final break with Britain. Many Freemasons were among the signatories.

New president

When the new country had to elect its first president, the role went to a Freemason, George Washington. The president made no secret of his affiliation – on the contrary, when the newly elected leader laid the foundation stone for the Capitol building in the new city of Washington, which bore the new president's name, a large gathering of brothers, accompanied by an orchestra and artillery, marched to the construction site "in the greatest solemn dignity, with music playing, drums beating, colors [sic] flying and spectators rejoicing", as *The Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette* enthusiastically reported.

At the site where the Capitol was erected, the Freemasons laid a plaque commemorating the day. "The plate was then delivered to the President, who, attended by the Grand Master pro tempore and three Most Worshipful Masters, descended to the cavazion trench and deposited the plate and laid it on the corner stone of the Capitol of the United States of America, on which were deposited corn, wine, and oil, when the whole congregation

Clothing | Lambskin apron



A HEAVENLY FACE symbolises God, who watches over everything.

TO FREEMASONS, Solomon's Temple is an example of perfect construction.

joined in reverential prayer, which was succeeded by Masonic chanting honors [sic] and a volley from the artillery," the newspaper continued. Corn, wine and oil are traditional Masonic symbols, used in several different settings, including at the opening of new lodges.

Hitler was a sworn enemy of the Freemasons. The Führer was convinced that the Freemasons, with the Jews, would take over the world.

The Freemasons also left their mark on New York. France gave the Statue of Liberty to the Americans as a gift to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the country's independence and to mark the friendship between the two nations. The statue's designer, French sculptor **Frédéric Bartholdi**, was a devoted Freemason, and a

FRÉDÉRIC BARTHOLDI first visited the United States in 1871 with a proposal for a statue. He also designed a number of other monuments in the United States.

large part of the money required to create the Statue of Liberty came from brothers in France and the US. When the statue was to be renovated in 1986, Freemasons in the US raised two million dollars for the purpose. In memory of the Freemasons' role in construction and renovation, the plinth now carries a plate bearing two of the order's most important symbols – the square and compass.

Damaged reputation

The spread of colonialism by European nations led to the Freemasons not only reaching the United States, but other parts of the world, too – however, all was not well.

In 1826, the US branch was roundly condemned when Freemason William Morgan disappeared without a trace. Morgan boasted that he had written a book that would reveal the order's most closely guarded secrets. Shortly after, he vanished. ➤

Rumours spread that he'd been abducted and murdered by the Freemasons to prevent his book's publication. Several Freemasons were arrested, but denied the charges, claiming that they had instead paid Morgan \$500 to go to Canada. The accused were sentenced for abduction, but not murder.

The case was never solved and suspicion lingered. The result was that the Freemasons lost much of their support and were denounced by several prominent politicians. Morgan's book was later published, topping the bestseller lists due to the mysterious disappearance of its author.

FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT

became a Freemason in 1911 in New York. In 1933, he helped inaugurate his son Elliott as a Master Mason.

Hitler and the Freemasons

The opposition faced by the Freemasons in the US, however, was nothing compared to the persecution they endured during the Nazi and fascist regimes of the 20th century.

"European Freemasonry has been persecuted more thoroughly in the last twenty years than

ever before in its turbulent history. Mussolini strangled Freemasonry in Italy in 1925. Hitler annihilated the German lodges when he came to power, and later those in Czecho-Slovakia [sic], Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Greece. European Masons died, went underground, or fled," US magazine *Newsweek* wrote in 1945.

The Nazis did not care for Freemasons because of their liberal ideas, and because the order was connected to Jews. The lodges were disbanded and an unknown number of Freemasons ended up in prisons and concentration camps.

It was only a temporary setback, however. Victory over the Nazis and fascists was due in no small part to two powerful Freemasons: Britain's prime minister Winston Churchill and US president **Franklin D Roosevelt**. As early as 1941, four years before the end of the war, the two met in the Gulf of Argentina at Newfoundland. Here, the heads of state set out plans for what the world would look like once the war was over. This new world order became known as the Atlantic Charter and, with its ideas about people's right to self-determination, free trade and an organisation to represent all the world's nations, was entirely in the spirit of Freemasonry.

Roosevelt's successor, Harry S Truman, was also a Freemason, as were several other US presidents and powerful men across the globe.

Today, there are around six million Freemasons worldwide. Despite the organisation's goal of co-operation and advancement, Freemasons are still accused of ruling the world in secret. Thus, the Masonic order continues the legacy of the Knights Templar: a group of powerful men who operate in secret and provide the basis for conspiracy theories.

The Illuminati

Today, the Freemasons are far from the only secret society surrounded by mystery and suspected of trying to achieve world domination. The Illuminati, for example, has long been accused of covertly influencing world affairs.

The group was founded on 1st May 1776, by the 26-year-old German professor of philosophy Johann Adam Weishaupt, as a protest against the monarchy and the church. It had a radical agenda that included abolishing the church, the monarchy, marriage and property. It was outlawed by the authorities in the 1780s, but many believe that the organisation lives on – either as part of the Masonic order or as an independent society.

The Illuminati plays a prominent role in conspiracy theories and has featured in a number of popular films and books, most

Apparatus Coffin



THE IMAGE of a compass is found on the coffin used in the death ritual.

THE SKULL AND CROSSBONES reminds the brothers of their mortality.

THE DOORWAY is a symbol of the Masonic spirit entering a divine life.

Masons strive towards the highest level

Freemasons have three main degrees, aimed at self-improvement. To advance each level, Masons must undergo a series of rituals, as well as swear to keep everything they hear secret.

**I will always heke,
forever conceal, and
never reveal any...
secrets or mysteries
of or belonging to
Freemasonry**

Apprentice

Upon entering a lodge, an Apprentice symbolically abandons his old life and begins a new one as a Freemason. The initiation consists of a series of rituals, and the Apprentice has to sit for a while and write down his thoughts regarding the spiritual journey upon which he is embarking.

TASKS: New Apprentices must familiarise themselves with the lodge's traditions and, like all Masons, strive to become better people.

Master Mason

Master Masons must take care of younger brothers and fellow Master Masons. Among other vows, Master Masons promise to provide for other Masons as well as their widows and children if need be. They also swear to keep the secrets of other Master Masons, with the exception of murder and betrayal. They will never engage in sexual relations with other Masons' wives, mothers or daughters.

TASKS: Master Masons must oversee the operation of the lodge, ensure that rules and traditions are adhered to, and – like other Masons – contribute to the betterment of society.

**I further
solemnly promise
to act as a true and
faithful Craftsman,
to answer signs, obey
summonses...**

Fellow Craft Freemason

This Freemason has come through the first stage of the Lodge. This degree symbolises maturity in a man's life, and the Fellow Craft's mission is to continue his journey towards becoming the best person possible.

TASKS: Fellow Crafts must follow the command of the Master of the Lodge, gather knowledge and improve themselves.

**I will be
ever swift of foot
to save, help,
and execute
benevolence to a
fellow creature
in distress, and
more particularly
to a Brother
Freemason.**

From **900 BC** to **2018**

MASONRY'S ORIGINS HIDDEN IN HISTORY

Freemasons officially celebrated their 300th anniversary in 2017, but no one knows exactly how Freemasonry began, and its origins may be traced back to Old Testament times.

1307 Some Knights Templar possibly reach Scotland after fleeing arrest and execution. They may have helped formulate the first Masonic rules.

900 BC Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem is erected. Freemasons trace the history of the lodge to here, and the temple's supposed builder, Hiram Abiff, is still venerated by the lodge.



1200 Cathedrals are built. Stonemasons join together in lodges, which form the basis of the Freemasons.



1826 William Morgan is abducted and possibly murdered, because he is about to publish a book that is critical of Freemasonry.



1789 The first US president, George Washington, is sworn in. He is a Freemason.



1900 Freemasonry reaches its peak, with around eight million members worldwide.

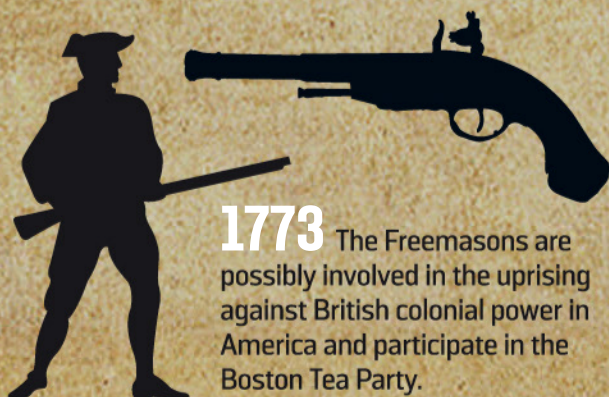
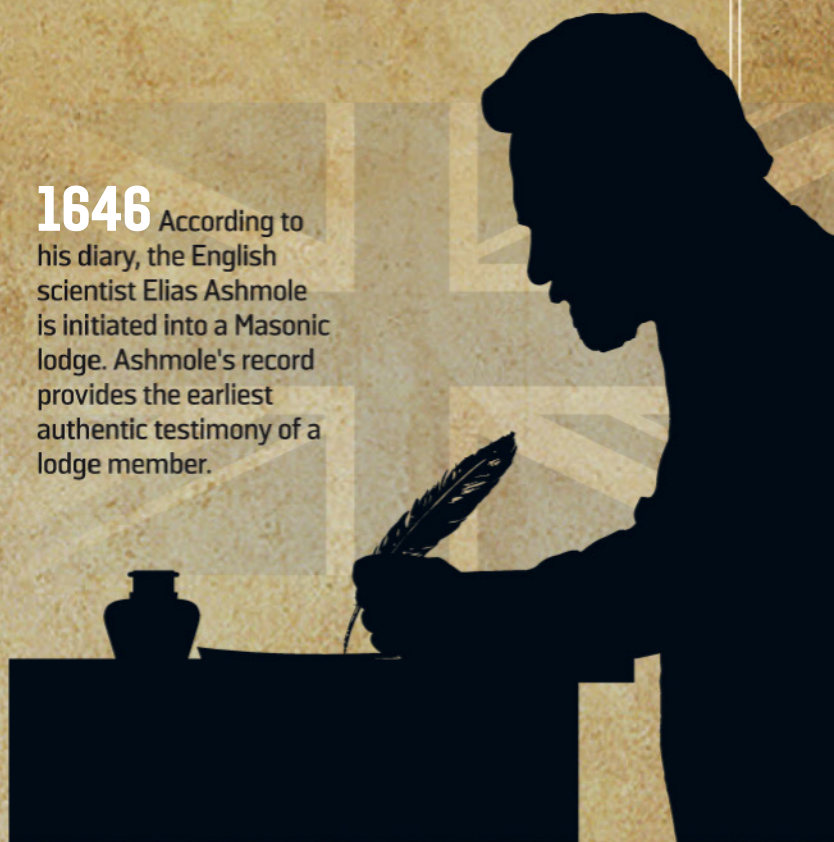
1935 The Nazis dissolve Masonic lodges in Germany and confiscate their property. Many members end up in concentration camps.





1390 The Halliwell Manuscript is written. It outlines guidelines for construction and moral living, and is seen as the basis of Freemasonry.

1646 According to his diary, the English scientist Elias Ashmole is initiated into a Masonic lodge. Ashmole's record provides the earliest authentic testimony of a lodge member.



1773 The Freemasons are possibly involved in the uprising against British colonial power in America and participate in the Boston Tea Party.

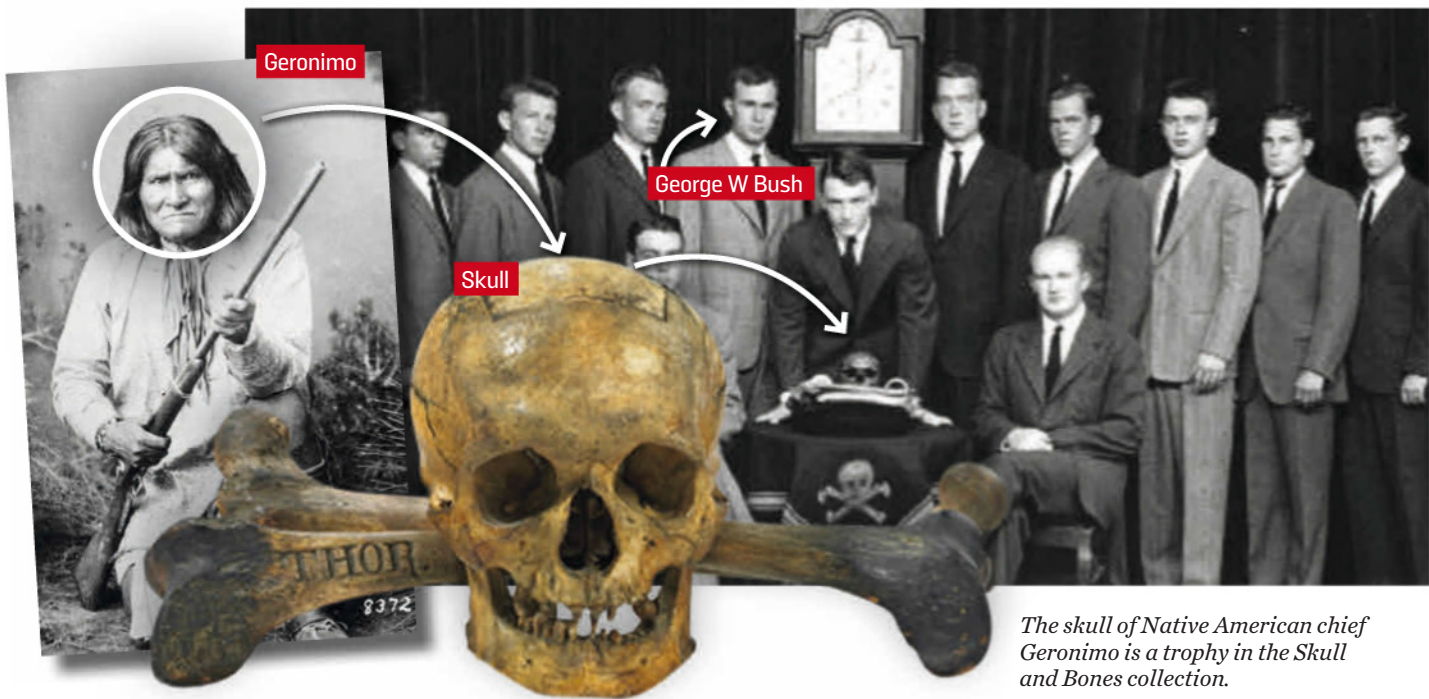
1738 The pope banishes Freemasonry in an edict that forbids Catholics from being members. The Catholic Church still disapproves of Freemasons today.



1974 Gerald Ford becomes president of the United States – the 14th and so far final president to be a Freemason.



2018 The number of Freemasons worldwide drops to around six million. Conspiracy theorists accuse them of plotting world domination.



The skull of Native American chief Geronimo is a trophy in the Skull and Bones collection.

Previously, only men could be admitted to Skull and Bones, but since the 1990s, women have also been allowed to join.

notably Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*. According to Brown, the Illuminati no longer exists, and in this he is correct: although some groups continue to use the name, the original Illuminati have long since disappeared.

Confession ensures loyalty

While the Illuminati no longer exists, the **Skull and Bones** society is very much alive – and has been subject to many of the same suspicions about a secret agenda for world domination.

It's a society for specially selected senior-year students at the elite US university Yale. The order was formed in 1832, and among its founders was Alphonso Taft, later Secretary of War and father of the 27th president of the United States, William Howard Taft. The association has had many members in the inner circle of the country's judiciary, administration and military – presidents George Bush and George W Bush included.

"I joined Skull and Bones, a secret society; so secret, I can't say anything more," George W Bush wrote in his autobiography.

What Skull and Bones really does is impossible to know, because the organisation is shut up tighter than a bank vault. The members, Bonesmen, never speak publicly about the group's activities, and over the years, virtually no details have come to light. The silence is partly due to the fact that the members are believed to have a hold over each other. Each year,

just 15 new students from Yale are included in the fraternity. This exclusivity makes Skull and Bones membership highly sought after.

No one can just sign up. Instead, older Bonesmen decide who might be a worthy member, giving candidates the so-called 'tap'. Once a student has been tapped, they are taken, blindfolded, into a room at the group's headquarters, the Tomb. Here,

they must answer a wide range of questions – including enquires about their sexual experiences and preferences. If the candidate refuses to answer, they are immediately taken back out – still blindfolded. The personal information is reportedly stored in a strongly guarded archive.

Approved candidates are allowed to see the interior of the headquarters, which is rumoured to hold many interesting objects, including the skull of the Native American Geronimo. Legend has it that a Bonesman stole it as a trophy after the death of the Apache chief in 1909.

For the Knights Templar, the members of Skull and Bones would have been considered enemies. Despite their shared use of secrecy, the Knights had a different motive; they were protectors of the poor, and selflessly pursued what they regarded as a sacred purpose. In that respect, it seems the Freemasons were more like descendants of the Knights Templar than Yale's Skull and Bones. And who knows, maybe they still exist, too? Only time and the unearthing of new evidence will tell. ■

“The members, Bonesmen, never speak publicly about the group's activities, and over the years, virtually no details have come to light.”

SKULL AND BONES

is surrounded by rumours of theft. Its members reportedly vie to outdo each other in stealing relics.



WHAT WE DO KNOW

The Freemasons keep secrets

- The Freemasons' **first Grand Lodge** was established in 1717 in London.
- The order follows the **legacy of the Knights Templar**.
- Freemasons can also belong to the **modern Knights Templar order**.
- Freemasons **happily admit** they are members.
- No Freemason may reveal the **rituals and practices** of the lodge.
- There are about **six million** Freemasons in the world today.

14

■ US presidents have been Freemasons, including George Washington, Franklin D Roosevelt and, most recently, Gerald Ford.



WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

When was Freemasonry born?

1 Freemasonry probably emerged as a type of secret **craft guild for itinerant masons** in the Middle Ages.

The Halliwell Manuscript, which dates from around 1390, lays down rules for

working and behavioural practices and is seen as the source of Freemasonry. But researchers do not know exactly when the first lodge was created, and it is uncertain when the term Freemason was first used.

What is their connection to the Knights Templar?

2 Officially, the link between the Knights Templar and Freemasons was established during the 18th century, but it might date from earlier. Some believe that the **Templars played a role** in the establishment of the first Masonic lodges in Scotland, but because the origins of Freemasonry are lost in time, historians can't say for sure whether the Knights Templar participated in or inspired the first Masonic lodges.

How much power does the order have?

3 From the outside, Masonic lodges are simply a meeting place for men of a certain age who believe in a higher purpose. But according to some theories, the lodges are also a hub for the development of a **secret agenda to influence world events** – much like secret societies such as Skull and Bones and the Bilderberg Group. Because the organisations are completely clandestine, the public has no way of knowing what's really going on. As the members of these groups are often influential and powerful individuals, it's likely that world events are discussed, but no one really knows whether Freemasons plan or implement events to bring about change.



The square and compass is the most famous symbol of the Masons. The G stands for both God and geometry.

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Welcome

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Citations

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p. 6-7: Getty Images

Contents

p. 8-9: Getty Images, Shutterstock

Downfall of the Knights Templars

p. 10: Fredrik Alfredsson
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Medieval war machine

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p. 38-39: Moby Games, *Historie*
magazine archive
p. 40-42: *Historie* magazine archive
p. 42: Shutterstock
p. 43: Shutterstock

p. 44: Shutterstock, Getty Images
p. 46: *Historie* magazine archive
p. 48-49: Imageselect
p. 50-51: theknightstemplar.org
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France, Shutterstock
p. 53: Shutterstock

The Templars' secret world

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p. 57 *Historie* magazine archive
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p. 64: Shutterstock,
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p. 66: Shutterstock
p. 67: Shutterstock

The hunt for the Holy Grail

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Shutterstock, Imageselect
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France
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p. 79: Shutterstock

Is the Shroud of Turin real or fake?

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p. 82-83: Getty Images
p. 84-85: Shutterstock
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p. 90-91: Shutterstock
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blogspot.dk, Shutterstock, www.
shroudofturinwithoutallthe hype.
wordpress.com
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com, www.shroud.com, Shutterstock
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p. 95: Shutterstock, Imageselect
p. 96: Shutterstock
p. 98: Courtesy Gabriel Vandervort/

Ancientresource.com
p. 99: Templarios

Secret heirs of the Templars

p. 100: Unknown
p. 102: Unknown
p. 103: William Hogarth
p. 104-105: www.ranker.com, Nadar,
FBI, NASA, Barbara Krafft, Library
of Congress, Imageselect
p. 106: Chris Hodapp
p. 107: Diliff
p. 108: Shutterstock
p. 109: Shutterstock, Getty Images
p. 110: Shutterstock
p. 111: Shutterstock, The White
House Historical Association
p. 112: *Historie* magazine archive
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Collection/Bridgeman Images,
Ben Wittick/National Archives and
Records Administration
p. 119: www.3rd.store

Indexes

p. 120: Bridgeman Images
p. 121: Imageselect



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Downfall of the Knights Templars

Pages 10-35

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“God is not pleased. We have enemies of the faith in the kingdom.”

These were the words of King Philip IV of France on arresting the Knights Templars in 1307. For 200 years the Templars were one of Europe's most powerful orders. The Christian warriors had protected pilgrims in the Holy Land and fought valiantly in the crusades. But they were also a secretive sect who gathered immense wealth and – according to rumours – held some of Christianity's holiest relics. But Philip, who was hopelessly in debt to the Knights, was plotting their downfall. Soon the Templars were accused of heresy and the French king moved to secure their wealth and power. But he was disappointed, for the Templar treasure, along with many of its Knights, had vanished...

